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NATIONAL FILM AND VIDEO LENDING COLLECTION

This collection on film and video comprises the General Lending Collection and the Film Study Collection. As of July 1st, the entire collection will be passed over to ScreenSound Australia, the National Screen and Sound Archive (The Archive) which is currently a part of the Australian Film Commission. This means that the Archive will take over both ownership from the National Library of Australia, and management from the Australian Centre for the Moving Image in Melbourne.

The Library first signalled its intention to dispose of its film collections in 1996, and it was expected at the time that the newly constituted Film and Sound Archive would take over. For various political and financial reasons this did not eventuate, and the Collection moved to Melbourne under the banner of the then Cinemedia. ACMI/Cinemedia have done a marvellous job managing the Collection with varying degrees of support from the Library over six years. Much was achieved until staff losses in 2003 led to a mere holding operation. Client services up to the present have been of a very high standard and there have been very few complaints from users.

As the long term solution there is no doubt that the Collection is about to find its true and hopefully final home. This is a unique and world renowned collection and should be able to go to the heights demanded by new technology when it is owned and managed by the one body with finally an acquisitions budget to match its aspirations. I have no doubt that the appointments already made within the Archive to manage the move from Melbourne, and its establishment in Canberra, will be most diligent in their stated aim to cause 'no disruption to services'. David Boden (Acting Deputy Director, ScreenSound Australia) assures me that there will be no delay in dispatches or ability to take forward bookings.

All of this being said however, I was astounded to learn that the Archive intends to move the Collection to Canberra 'at the earliest possible moment' as soon as it assumes official responsibility. This means that the films that have bookings on them will be separated from the rest of the Collection, before they are removed to Canberra, to ensure that they are delivered within the required time frame. Before this, MEDIANET, the booking and cataloguing system, has to be installed in Canberra, and then the current data transferred from Melbourne with new operators being trained. This is an operation not to be taken lightly. The Archive is already taking steps to acquire the Medianet license and system.

It is not clear yet where the titles already booked will reside – with ACMI at Park St, or move to the Archive in Clarendon St, or move to Canberra. One can only hope for the first alternative. Otherwise there will be a period with films in three different locations with the distinct possibility of bookings being placed at any one time on all three. The Archive staff will have control of all bookings and deliveries from 1st July 2004. Apart from David Boden, who is the Deputy Director responsible for this project, Ann Baylis is the Senior Manager, and Kate McLoughlin the Project Manager for the move and operation of the Collection. Both Ann and Kate were with the Film Collection before they moved to the Archive. In Melbourne, Helen Tully, manager of The Archive 's Melbourne office will be in charge. These appointments show a high level of commitment on the part of the Archive, and all of them are dedicated people, but the task ahead is quite huge.

The exposure to Film Societies and other borrowers is quite clear. When the Collection moved to Melbourne it was done during the 'dead' period of December/January 1996/97, and borrowings were suspended for a period whilst the Collection was bedded down in its new home. Disruption was kept to an absolute minimum. We are promised that there will be no disruption this time, the only difference being that the move will take

place whilst hundreds (or even thousands) of bookings are being processed and returned, and new bookings being accepted. It is unlikely that express bookings will be available during the relocation.

At this stage, with six weeks to go, I recommend that all societies examine their bookings on the Collection for JULY, AUGUST and SEPTEMBER very carefully, and have a plan 'B' in place in the event of a film being delayed or not appearing. All societies know when to expect deliveries of their films i.e how many days before screening. If after July 1st your films do not arrive on the usual day, start ringing to find out why. Everything may run like clockwork, but its better to be ready for any eventuality.

Unfortunately I shall be overseas from the 24th May to 22nd June (approx), but I have been invited to see the new operation in action both in Melbourne and Canberra when I return. Hopefully, I can do this before July 1st and send out another letter outlining the new operation in detail. At this time I will report on the future of the Embassy Collections, the AFTRS films and the ROADSHOW Collections all of which will remain with ACMI in Melbourne, and hopefully on national distribution.

In the meantime the numbers to ring will be as follows: (02) 6248 2049 and 0418 117 501. These will reach Kate McLoughlin. If she is not available try Ann Baylis (02)6248 2000 in Canberra or Helen Tully (03) 9685 5800 in Melbourne. When the Minister (Rod Kemp) signs the document officially transferring the Collection from the National Library to ScreenSound Australia, David Boden will send out a letter to all borrowers outlining the operational details. The Archive will continue to keep people informed through their website www.screensound.gov.au and will have available a freecall 1800 number to ring in June.

John Turner

PRESIDENT.

20th May 2004