

Rachael Stoeltje: Thanks, Jackie [Jacqueline Stewart]. I also just want to mention, I don't know, Brian [Graney] put up a huge bibliography. Does everybody have access to that? No?

Brian Graney: No, not yet.

Rachael Stoeltje: Just to mention, Jackie's [Jacqueline Stewart] Tyler Texas article is in it, Chris Horak [Jan-Christopher Horak], there's a great, great, bibliography that can go alongside this whole conference that I thought was really awesome and half of the authors are in the room right now, I think. So, at some point, people should reference that.

So we're going to move into my advocate for preservation, now that I've broken everybody down into sort of different little advocates for the physical carrier in this genre of lost film. So, Mike Mashon is up next. He is the Head of the Moving Image Section at the Library of Congress. At the National Audiovisual Conservation Center, which I believe he's going to talk about, he oversees cataloguing, processing, physical integrity, storage, and preservation of films and video. So I sort of see him as this big giant advocate for everything preservation-related. And if you go to any conference anywhere about film preservation, his name comes up like a million times because you start with like Orphans Midwest, and it was like thanks to Mike [Mashon] for preserving the film, Pordenone San Francisco Silent Film Festival, so he does a huge amount of film preservation or as he'll probably tell you he oversees a lot of that because he will do that.

So, in relation to this, I think he's going to talk about a film that we saw at Orphans Midwest here that they preserved at the Library of Congress, *Hellbound Train*, by the Gists [Eloyce and James Gist] and some of the work that they do there, and talking about preservation, restoration, conservation. So it will be a good educational talk. So welcome Mike Mashon please.

Mike Mashon: Well now that Rachael's [Stoeltje] given my talk for me, thank you very much. I'm going to hide this for a sec if you don't mind while I get set up. I'm delighted to be here. As a matter of fact, I was, it's always great to be here. I was here for the Orphan's Midwest Symposium not too long ago. So it's wonderful to have an opportunity to be back here and see some of the folks that we got to visit with last time.

So what I'm going to talk a little bit about today in my presentation is really about the evidentiary value of the physical artifact, and dig into a little bit more detail about that, and what we mean by that at the Library of Congress. This sort of evidence is not always privileged in film studies, and for very good reasons which I'll talk about. But it certainly needs some consideration, so I'm particularly pleased to see that be a central part of our interaction over the next couple of days.

Now, in the archival world, we frequently make distinctions between preservation and restoration of film. For a purist like me, we'll say when we preserve a film we are making as faithful of copy as we possibly can; when we restore a film, we're using multiple elements to come up with the best copy that we can of a film. And there's always lots of discussions around those words, which are very, very freighted. But I also want to bring in a third word today, which is conservation. And I'll dwell a little bit more on that

because if we're looking at the content, this carrier, I really want to focus a little bit more on the carrier side of that equation.

Now we have two mantras at the Packard campus for Audiovisual Conservation where I work in Culpeper, Virginia, one of which I like a little bit more than the other. The first is preservation for access. We've always said as we were planning this facility that preservation for, the reason why we're preserving material is to make it accessible. And the second is that preservation begins with good storage. Now, here again we see a distinction between the content, preserving for access. That's our animating philosophy, versus the carrier, preservation begins with good storage. And that's just a fact. It really is. But the one thing that we need to be aware of is we don't want to get lulled into a false sense of complacency. It's very easy to celebrate the fact that we've now protected physical elements in hope that one day, one glorious day; we can provide access to them. I tend to fall into this trap myself. I think every day about how we can provide access to our collections beyond the walls of the Library of Congress, and I get frustrated that we're not doing, we're just not where I think that we need to be, and I keep pushing on that, and I tell myself, well at least the films and video are stored under proper environmental conditions, which is great but that's just a part of the equation. We can't let the sentence end there.

Now, there are very practical limitations to providing researcher access to physical elements, nitrate especially. I mean we're not ... it is only under very certain circumstances that we would invite people to the Packard Campus in order to be able to look at nitrate films, not that we don't trust you, we don't, but you know ... no, it requires, there's staff intervention with that. But if people have really good ideas, and there's a reason why they need to do it, certainly we'll pull it. The things Jackie [Jacqueline Stewart] talks about, going to visiting our reading room in Washington DC, you can go there now and you can see files, you can see videotape, but you can still see 35 millimeter and 16 millimeter. But frequently now, we're even restricting access to the film elements if we have a digital surrogate because we don't want to put anymore wear and tear on those prints. We typically don't service the paper prints, which are the earliest material we have in our collection. Nor do we make the nitrate available. But if you've got a specific research project you need to look at paper prints or you need to look at nitrate, we can make that available in Culpeper with, we'll make you jump through a few hoops, but sorry.

There is no question though that film and video artifacts can speak as eloquently to us, I believe, and sometimes even more so than the actual content of the images that they record. Now, the Library of Congress holdings are full of unidentified film. People have touched on that already this morning. These are films with no head or tail credits. There's nothing that really identifies them, but particularly in silent films and an inner-title that gives you any idea what studio released this, certainly not going to give you the title of a film. There's just not a lot to go on. So our catalogue is chock-a-block full of unidentified western number 34, and that sort of thing.

And in the last two years, and the third one will be coming up this July, we've hosted a symposium/workshop that we call Mostly Lost, which brings together scholars and archivists, and collectors, and fan boys, and the idol curious, to come to our theater

where we will show these unidentified films, and we also provide some resources, books and other things, that people can use to help us identify the films. So they're, when we're in the theater, typically you're looking at visual cues. You're looking at costumes. You're looking at license plates. You're looking at locales. There are a lot of different things that a person can sort of dig into to be able to get at least a little bit more information about the film. And we have a pretty good success rate. I mean I think it's pretty good. It would range somewhere between 35 and 50 percent of the films that we show during Mostly Lost eventually get identified. We have a much higher success rate with the comedy films. That's the crowd that we primarily draw. I don't know how many of you were here for Slapsticon several months ago and you know what obsessives those folks can be, and we have a lot, I say that with love, with love, but that we have a lot of that in our collection. And so it's amazing to me, I mean I've never identified a thing, I'll never identify a film unless there's like the Beatles on screen or something. And, but, you know, people see an actor and an actress together and they'll say, oh, well, that's this obscure guy and that's that obscure girl, and the only film that they made together was for KB in 1912, so this has to be ... it's wonderful, and scary, all at the same time.

But even before we project those films, or frequently show a file from where we've scanned the nitrate, usually silent, usually coming directly from the nitrate, the preservation of which, these original films have been thoroughly examined for their physical clues, which is a very, very, analogue process. So I want to show you, kind of run through some of these very quickly as I talk. I'm not going to dwell on any of them. This is a slide show that was put together by Anthony L'Abbate, who is a Preservation Officer at the George Eastman House. And Anthony [L'Abbate] has, well frequently as part of Mostly Lost, although I know he's done this other context, Film Identification 101 Workshop. So some of the things that you're seeing in the slide show here are kind of the range of physical markings that we use to identify films, or at least narrow the range of possibilities. So these markings help us determine provenance, which are certainly a crucial component of preservation, every bit as much as a pictorial quality. So I was interested to hear Jackie [Jacqueline Stewart] talk about, was it *Body and Soul*, you said? Oh, *Scar of Shame*, forgive me. And, yes, that's the kind of thing that Ken Weissman would have been looking for, edge codes. We go through this all the time because we want to find out when a particular print was made and what are early surviving material. I mean I think of our restoration of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, which came from a 1939, the original camera negative but there was also a reprint in 1948 in which they used another, they blew up some 16 millimeter footage and inserted it into the 1948 negative. These are some ... now I'm getting to a point in the slide show where it talks about things that you look for within the frame, so before we were looking at physical characteristics of the film itself. But knowing more about those physical characteristics is certainly a very important part of film identification and preservation.

So, clearly this identification through physical aspects of the film is a very intensively analogue process, and one of the challenges we'll confront here is how to employ digital tools in the service of extracting more information from the corporeal.

So now, let me switch over real quick. Give me a sec here. I'm going to show you a clip. Go back to Rachael [Stoeltje] mentioned *Hellbound Train*. Alright. Do you see that? Let me blow that up full screen here. Where is my ... oh, you can see this well enough, can't

you? Hold up, there we go. Where is full screen on this, guys? Help me. View, view, view, thank you, enter full screen, thank you, hello. Okay. Alright.

So this is we're working on this restoration right now. It's put on by James and Eloyce Gist. It exists in multiple fragments. We talked more about this at Orphans Midwest, and a really nice presentation there. So we're working with a professor from Howard University, Steven Torriano Berry, who's already done a lot of work on this film. We're going back now and scanning the 16 millimeter elements that we have, and working with him and others to kind of reorder it because it exists mostly in fragmentary form, multiple takes, shots, over looking at ways that we can put this back together again. So this is a, this comes from our two case scan. We've got about 80 reels that we're going through and scanning as we work our way toward the restoration. Now but you will notice that the print is over-scanned. So we're capturing a lot of information here. You're seeing the sprockets which can often times be very important. We're capturing information above and below the frame line. You're actually not seeing the entire scan, as I'm showing it to you here but we're getting the information here above and below that frame line. We're getting it from edge to edge. If you look on the right-hand side, every once in a while you can see some edge code and Kodak, if you're looking really quickly, go past there. I mean this is all that's sort of marginalia, if you want to call it that, that we can capture in these particular film prints. These are very important to us, capture soundtrack. If this had a soundtrack, we'd be able to see that as well.

Now, for online presentation, typically we're going to crop the file, just mask it. And that will be available for online viewing, although we're not going to do that probably in every case because, for one, it actually takes a fair amount of time to crop all of that out, and there's some instances where we'll just put this raw scan up for researchers to look at. But the important point to remember is this is over-scan is the way that we do it and that these files will always be available for researcher access. It is a way for us to be able to at least in a small way to begin to open up greater access to our collection to researchers so that they will not only attend to the image but at least in a digital surrogate being able to attend to the physicality of the film itself.

Now it's very exciting to think about the possibilities of using new tools and tools that have yet to be imagined to extract information from these files beyond just the moving image that's printed on the artifact, and I look forward to having all of this figured out by, what, tomorrow afternoon, have it done? Thank you very much.