

Rachael Stoeltje: Hi. I'm Rachael Stoeltje. I'm the Director of the Indiana University Library's Film Archive here at IU. And I have a super awesome panel coming up that I think will tie in really nicely to Greg's [Gregory Waller] panel early today. Our panel in particular talks, we're focusing more on its called Carrier is Content, right? So you're thinking more about the actual physical object, and the materiality, and I'm going to turn it over to all of them really soon but I wanted to just point out some things that I think that they're going to be hitting on, and we'll see if they actually, if we're all in sync on this.

So some of the ideas I think that Brian [Graney] has been talking about, and thank you, Brian [Graney], for putting this together, this is pretty great, is the notion of the physical object, right? So content versus the carrier. So one thing that I think is kind of interesting that people tend to overlook, and it came up earlier, is the physical object does actually contain a huge amount of information, the leader and the tail, and the edge code. So when you're actually looking at the original object, it actually does play into what that object means. So that's kind of crucial, point one.

The relation to scholars as archivists, and I think it's kind of interesting, I've decided my whole panel is just really about advocacy, that all of them are preservationists, they're advocates for this material that is either lost or what I prefer to call not catalogued sometimes. So to get back to Greg's [Gregory Waller] comments about metadata, I think the biggest problem in most archives is we just need like 100 extra cataloguers each, right? So even if we develop all of the tools that are going to help you do the searching, unless somebody has gone in and done original cataloguing of this particularly unique material, it's just not accessible because ... anyway, that takes a huge amount of time. So even though there are new tools, RDAs coming around, there's a lot of cool new cataloguing things coming up, but most of us I think just need those cataloguers in place to do the really nice work.

So my new panel that I'm calling sort of proponents advocates, for lost early cinema, we're going to start with Dr. Jacqueline Stewart, and she is Professor in Cinema and Media Studies at the University of Chicago. Her research and teaching focuses on African American film, literature, and culture, moving image spectatorship and exhibition, in the role of race and orphan media in need of preservation. She, along with our other presenter, Chris Horak, she's a co-creator of the LA Rebellion, creating a new black media image. And she's author of *Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity*.

So I think she's going to present us with some fun discussions. And hopefully, and we're going to do the same thing the first panel did, and everybody's going to present, and then we're going to have I think a good chunk of time to open it up to discussion to talk about sort of preservation advocacy, access discovery, carrier, lost films, all of that. So please welcome Dr. Jacqueline Stewart.

Jacqueline Stewart: Thank you, Rachael [Stoeltje]. Thanks everyone at IU. Thank you, Brian [Graney], for making this happen. You never think anybody is really reading anything that you write, and you did, and you're engaging with it, and it's really exciting,

and I hope it's the beginning of a much bigger set of conversations that we're going to have.

So we were asked to reflect on our experiences in the archives around the questions of the fragmentary and variability of film materials. And so what I thought I would do is sort of focus on some questions around film gauge and think for a little bit about 16 millimeter. And I hope that the comments I'm going to make will resonate with some of the things that we've already been talking about, especially this question of the relationship between artifact and content, and this issue of interpretation, how we're interpreting the relationships between those two things.

So, for anyone here who doesn't know this, and sorry for everybody in here who I know knows this history thoroughly; 35 millimeter has been sort of the global theatrical standard for film preservation. Up until 1950, these films were made on highly flammable nitrate film stock. And so the development of safety film, or 16-millimeter film, in the early 1920's, became an important avenue for amateurs to engage with filmmaking, film exhibition. And I think that the distinctions between film gauges can be really important for some of the kinds of materiality questions that we're talking about today. Palo Cherchi Usai was mentioned earlier in Brian's [Graney] opening remarks when he encourages us to think about how we might study films in as many different prints as possible. This includes original and duplicate negatives, release prints of different generations, and gauges. And there's so much really rich and important scholarship that's being done now on non-theatrical film venues, and non-theatrical film cultures.

Greg Waller's work in this area is extremely important, thinking about how it is that 16 millimeter opened up possibilities for using films as for educational and sort of propagandistic purposes. Cara [Caddoo] talked about the importance of lodges and churches. And there are so many other venues in which films were being shown that have not been explored as we've been focusing on commercial theatrical filmmaking. And I think that there's been kind of, you know, a general acknowledgement in early black film histories that people like Oscar Micheaux showed their films in churches, right? But we've just begun to dig more deeply into some of the details about what it meant to show films in these context. And I think we still have much to learn about the gauges in which these films were shown. So we know, for example, that the Lincoln Motion Picture Company showed their film, the "Realization of a Negro's Ambition", in 1916, at the National Negro Business League Meeting, in Kansas City, I think. But as we think more about how films could be used in those kinds of booster sorts of contexts, it may be useful to think about this question of gauge and the infrastructures, the equipment that could be used to bring films to people, not just during the teens but also the 20's, 30's, 40's, and beyond.

So in addition to these questions about the non-theatrical, I think that 16-millimeter also opens up some really interesting questions around the role of film collectors in the histories of film archiving and presentation. I had a fantastic discussion about this with Andy Urich on the way down from Chicago yesterday. He's doing dissertation work on film collectors. And film collectors and film archives have had a long and complicated history with each other that would seem to be worth exploring. So, I'm going to try to hit

on these two themes and narrating just a few examples of my own research experiences and kind of like confessing my own ignorance about these questions, and how I kind of like saw the light.

So the first time this happened for me was doing research at the Library of Congress, my dissertation research, in the mid-1990's. I had a week to watch a bunch of stuff that I had asked for weeks in advance with the letter of recommendation from my Dissertation Chair. And about four days in, someone pointed out to me that in the sort of viewing area, where you watch stuff on flatbed steam bay projectors, that there was another side of the room where the rest of the stuff that I had asked for was waiting for me to watch. There was a 16-millimeter side, sort of by the front door, and then the 35 stuff was on the opposite side. It never occurred to me in moving from one side to the other to think about why it is that the paper print stuff was on 16 millimeter and why more of the features, the later stuff, was on 35 millimeter. And it was years later in reading Anthony Slide's book, *Nitrate Won't Wait*, he has a brief description of a kind of informal initiative by the American Film Institute to try to collect and preserve films by, for, about African Americans at the Library of Congress. And they did this largely by contacting collectors, and securing some of their holdings for this national collection. Slide mentions, for example, someone named Herb Graff, who I know nothing about, worked in the garment ...

Unknown: From New York.

Jacqueline Stewart: New York City, yes, worked in the garment industry, yes, and he had many black audience films that ended up at the Library of Congress. It seems to me that that initiative alone, the AFI's decision and the process by which they collected these black films could be a really interesting kind of research project, because it opens up these questions about the relationships between archives and private collectors, and how their collections overlap with each other, compete with each other, in a variety of ways.

It was also in watching these films in the Library of Congress where I began to really sort of think about the problem of teaching these kinds of materials, and like the bad quality of the films, which is something that we alternately sort of lament and celebrate. Ron Green celebrates this aspect of Micheaux's being like he's the baddest filmmaker of all time. But when you think about, having watched these films, and sometimes really horrible dupey reduction prints, it helps us to be more self-reflexive about what we say about their style, or at least I hope that it would raise those kinds of questions for us.

Alright. Oh, shoot, I had a slide to show you. Yes, I came to learn what these FBB, FGE things meant in terms of the gauge, the gauges of these films. Okay, jumping ahead a bit. When I was a grad student, in 1998, I curated a film series at our student doc films, student film society. It's about black musicals, and I thought I was being really hip to show *Car Wash*, to take up the question is *Car Wash* a black musical. It's a film I've seen millions of times growing up on television. But when I saw the print that was being shown, it was a 16-millimeter print; it was completely different from any version of *Car Wash* I had ever seen. There was no cursing. All of the references to sex were out. Antonio Fargas plays this flamboyant drag queen, all of those scenes gone, and Danny

DeVito was in the movie, in a bunch of vignettes that I had never seen before. If you watch the regular version of the film, you can kind of see him at the end of one scene that's been cut from the movie, kind of gesticulating wildly. So I was angry that this was not the film that I wanted. Now, I see the value of thinking about these variant prints. Maybe this was a print that was shown on television; although it wasn't the version I had seen on television, but in some markets. It was on 16 millimeter, which maybe suggested it could have been used in K-12 or something, that it was a sort of cleaned up version that could then be used in other kinds of non-theatrical contexts. I traced the folks that I was working with who acquired this print. We couldn't get a 35-millimeter from Swank [Motion Pictures Inc.], I guess, is where doc films got a lot of their stuff. So the kids at doc films frequently read *Big Reel Magazine*, collect, sort of Hollywood collectable's listings, and bought prints from that were listed there. This one did not indicate that it was a cleaned up print. But this could be a really important source for us to begin to look at how it is that whatever we're calling black films could be circulated among collectors during some really important periods, later periods, of film history.

Also, I was able to get a projection report, sort of an inspection report, when this film was shown at doc films for the series, where there's this little note up here about how it contains large amount of variance from the video. And on the back, we got really like into how different this print was, sort of listing all of the ways in which this print is different now. I can see on Wikipedia how somebody's listed it all there as well. What if we were to try to secure these kinds of reports in the kind of repertory projection of black related films? This could be another way of getting some information about the state of the prints, to trace where these things were shown, and to get a sense also of how it is that people who deal with these variations all the time, people who exhibit films are fully aware of these issues that don't always present themselves to us unless we see them kind of like as problems.

And then this is I think something that goes along with the kinds of fantasies that Ally [Allyson Nadia Field] was talking about earlier and Shola's [Lynch] vision for what might be possible in terms of providing a broad cataloguing of African American films. I just went to the UCLA Film and Television Archives Catalogue for a film I assumed they had lots of copies of and there were like 15 or 16 copies of *Gone with the Wind*. And as you can see here, they've got a 35-millimeter nitrate print. They've got a 16-millimeter safety print, 35 safety, 70 safety, and so on. I think for the kind of materials that we're thinking about, if there could be some kind of central place to know where there are multiple prints, what their formats are across different institutions, that could be a really useful set of metadata that we might be able to use in order to explore some of these questions more deeply.

Alright. The last example is actually inspired by the work of Pearl Bowser, who I wish was with us today. Her pioneering work as a curator, as an author, and as a collector, has made the scholarship that we're doing possible, so I definitely want to honor her.

In the book *Oscar Micheaux and His Circle* that she co-edited with Charles Musser and Jane Gaines, she has a sort of two paragraph write-up of a missing wedding scene from the film *Scar of Shame*, Colored Players Film Corporation in Philadelphia, 1927. And she talks about how she acquired a 16-millimeter print of this film that has the wedding

scene that is missing from the 35-millimeter print that the AFI had. She doesn't reveal where she got this print. And then she has this equally kind of cryptic description of where the print may have come from, or its provenance? She said Ken Weissman, at the Library of Congress, told her that the print she has was made from a circa 1975 duplicate negative, that in turn came from a 1930 16 millimeter positive stock print. So maybe Ken Weissman was ascertaining this from the edge codes. I'm not quite sure. And then she speculates that the dating is 1930 16-millimeter print, this dating suggests a very early move into the non-theatrical market. So what would the non-theatrical market be for the *Scar of Shame* in the early 1930's? This is the kind of thing we might explore through some of the conventional sources that folks on the previous panel were talking about, such as maybe local listings in the black press.

In addition to this question of how and why this film moved so quickly into non-theatrical distribution, she raises some interesting questions of interpretation. So, one of the things that she says is that when you don't have this wedding scene, you get a kind of joke, you get Alvin proposing marriage and then six months later you cut to a scene in which Louise is holding what appears to be a baby. So it's like, oh, yes, we see why they had to get married, or something like that. She said the wedding scene sort of defuses the joke and instead gets us to focus on what are the important subplots of the film, which is about cast and class difference that Louise expects this marriage is going to elevate her, when in fact it's going to end up her dreams crushed like the head of this doll.

Pearl Bowser has always been very heavily invested in correcting and filling in the gaps in black film history. And I think this is an excellent example of the way in which she sees filling in this piece of a film as a way of redressing the kinds of negative representations that have been associated with African Americans in general and here African American women in particular. She doesn't speculate about why the wedding scene is not in the print that many people saw, but she's really worried that this wedding scene is not making its way into a video version, a VHS version, that the Library of Congress was circulating, that they weren't willing to kind of pull that back off the shelves and fix the film, and how audiences would get sort of the wrong impressions if they see a version that's not complete.

So as I sort of debate this issue in this Tyler Texas essay that Brian [Graney] was talking about, I think that her concerns most certainly are valid, but there's also some other ways that we can think about these issues and problems of variation and incompleteness, which is to say that if we think about these multiple prints in a more kind of Palimpsestic way, that as we ascertain more information about multiple prints, it gives us ways of thinking about their multiple lives of circulation. And I think what's even more challenging for us, and this is getting back to Greg's [Gregory Waller] question, it really makes us have to be more self-conscious about how we interpret these things, and situating ourselves in our particular historical moments of interpretation.

So, restoration projects can't ever get us to the correct reading of a film, but instead we might want to think about the multiplicity of readings, the multiplicity of meanings, and how these are activated by our acknowledgement of the multiplicity and the layer quality of the texts themselves. Thank you.