
Archive Forum

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Proposal for a Centre for Archival Research in Screen and Sound

The Centre for Archival Research would be initiated by the National Film and Sound Archive, in partnership with one or more of the university departments where screen/sound archiving and/or screen/sound history is taught.

The permanent base for the centre would be maintained in the Archive's Canberra premises, with research facilities and administration available on-site, and funded by the archive. All participating institutions would provide and fund representatives to a steering committee, which would meet in Canberra and would advise the Chair of the Centre, who would report to the Director of the Archive.

The staff of the centre would consist of:

- A Chair of the Centre: this would be a full-time contract position (probably 3 years in the first instance), advertised nationally, attached officially to one of the participating university departments, but the incumbent would be required to re-locate to Canberra during tenure of the position.
- The equivalent of at least one full-time research position from each of the participating institutions, distributed at their own discretion (i.e. it could be a single person full-time for a year, or it could be five people allocated one day per week each, or six people allocated two months full-time, or any other appropriate combination).
- Administrative staff as required.

The mission of the centre would be to conduct and support research on archival screen and sound, and in the practices of film and sound archiving.

Towards this goal, the centre would:

- maintain a register of all research using the archive's resources, and would publish this information periodically, noting as projects come to a conclusion;
- provide research facilities and support for the projects of centre staff, and ensure that the results of such projects are appropriately disseminated (for instance, in publications or media productions);
- provide research facilities for projects from outside the centre, and (within budget constraints) support dissemination of the results.

The possibility of funding this proposal through the ARC's Research Network scheme should be explored by the Director of the Archive.

It would be the responsibility of the Director of the Archive to seek the funding for the Chair of the Centre, from industry sponsorship in return for the publicity that such a prestigious position could supply (e.g. by naming rights). Funding for shorter Fellowships could also be sought through sponsorships, and participating institutions could choose to contribute more than one research position.

Within archive staff, the Director may choose to continue to reserve two full-time research positions, but the opportunity is also there to spread the research functions of the archive across all staff, in a manner similar to university sabbaticals - which would be a huge incentive for more staff to become involved in research. It is anticipated that the other contributing institutions would fund their researchers either through sabbatical leave provisions, or by seeking industry sponsorship for Fellowship positions and/or to provide relief staff while permanent staff take up Fellowships with the Centre.

The advantages of this proposal over that in the Directions paper are:

- it is a precise proposal, rather than an ambit claim;
- sources of funding are built into the proposal, including precisely what financial obligations would be placed on the archive;
- the means of co-operation between the archive and academic institutions is built into the proposal;
- it provides for all archive staff to be given the opportunity to engage in research on the collection, rather than assuming that research is something done by out-siders and/or specified researchers on the archive staff.

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