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The Korean Film Archive

In 1974, the Korean Film Depository was set up as a non-profit organization and in 1985 it gained a full membership from FIAF. In 1991 it changed the name into the Korean Film Archive, or KOFA, and it held the 58th FIAF congress in 2002 in Seoul. After 2002, the Korean Film Archive was reorganized as a government-affiliated public foundation and expanded the departments, and also opened two branches in Bucheon and Chuncheon. At long last this year it moved into new government building in Sangam-dong DMC center. It shows that archiving and preservation of the moving images is getting great importance in Korea now. In this paper, I will research how it does its duties as an archival institution.

- **Collecting, Conservation & Preservation**

The Korea Film Archive (KOFA) was in a haste to be established because North Korea joined the FIAF at the time of its inception. So KOFA continued to be operated without an appropriate policy for collection and preservation. It was only a few years ago that KOFA began to perform its proper duty. As it relocated to Seoul Arts Center in 1990, it changed to a juridical foundation “KOFA.” Looking at the status of films in its possession by year, films were held by the KOFA at a minuscule level before 1996 in which the mandatory system for submission of film copies was put in place. This means that even most of the films produced before the obligatory system was enforced have been lost or their whereabouts is not being identified. Especially, as the year of their production goes further back, the film holding rate gets to a serious level. There left not a single film of the movies which had been produced during the Japanese rule over the Korean peninsula and which are left in a whole-reel condition.

| Year | Film Produced | Film Acquired | Percentage (%) |
|--------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1910's | 7 | 0 | 0.0% |
| 1920's | 61 | 0 | 0.0% |
| 1930's | 73 | 5 | 6.8% |
| 1940's | 90 | 14 | 15.6% |
| 1950's | 307 | 50 | 16.3% |

| | | | |
|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1960's | 1,506 | 581 | 38.6% |
| 1970's | 1,368 | 1,020 | 74.6% |
| 1980's | 895 | 767 | 85.7% |
| 1990's | 766 | 688 | 89.8% |
| 2000's | 733 | 660 | 90.0% |
| Total | 5,806 | 3,785 | 65.2% |

<Domestic Feature Film (September, 2007)>

The films produced before 1945 and held by KOFA are found and brought in from overseas and not in a whole-reel condition at that. The most aged of the films in a whole-reel condition currently held by it is <Jayoomanse> (1946). If a film archive is called “A Film-related Materials Preserving Institution” in an encyclopedic meaning, considering such a bad preserving status, it can not be said that it does its duty perfectly. Before using film contents, films will have to be collected aggressively. The reason behind such a low holding rate for Korean film heritage is that above all, the recognition of film data was lacking. Since film producers regarded films only as means of making money, the films which had been shown once was left uncared in a warehouse and if the space was not enough, they were destroyed by fire. In 1970s, even the Department of Culture burned up films it had kept, citing the difficulty in managing them. This means that “a systematic loss” of film heritages took place earlier than their systematic preservation did. Secondly, there was no window through which films could be utilized after they were shown at

theaters. It can be seen that films could be used since 1980s in which the video market was formed. And the temperature and humidity should be maintained at proper levels to preserve films, but film producers could not expect to recover additional costs of preserving films in such way.¹

By the Article 25 of the Film Promotion Act put in operation in 1996, the domestic film prints must be submitted to the KOFA. Because of the law, the domestic films rated by government for screening have been preserved one hundred percent. The mandatory submission materials are film prints and scenarios.

| Year | Films Rated | Submitted Domestic Films | Submitted Foreign Films |
|------|-------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1996 | 19 | 19 | - |
| 1999 | 58 | 58 | - |
| 2000 | 56 | 56 | - |
| 2001 | 60 | 60 | - |
| 2002 | 139 | 112 | 27 |
| 2003 | 134 | 124 | 10 |
| 2004 | 102 | 88 | 14 |
| 2005 | 90 | 89 | 1 |
| 2006 | 125 | 121 | 4 |

¹ Korean Film Council, *A Study on Cultural/Industrial Use of Movie Contents*. (Korean Film Council Report, 2001), 21-22.

The KOFA is committed itself to searching and collecting various film-related materials as cultural heritage because the Korean films and documentaries remain just as records on documents. To collect the Korean film-related materials which have not discovered yet, the KOFA induces donation and trust by publicity. For whereabouts and information of the Korean-related moving images which are scattered abroad, the KOFA is trying to exchange information with FIAF's members and have a conference with international film festivals, and foreign archives and film companies.

A substantial number of the films of commercial long-piece films are preserved through the system for submission of copies as provided by law, but short films, independent films and documentaries are not subject to the submission of their copies. For this reason, unlike the commercial long-piece ones, there is relatively too few non-commercial film - independent and short films - held by the institution. The non-commercial film refers to the one which is made and distributed under the name of "an independent film" when classified into a wide category. Short films produced by educational institutions come under this category. It may be said the digital film which increases in number thanks to advances in digital technology also falls within this category.

However, in the case of small-scale short films, independent films and the films shown at film festivals, the KOFA should induce the submission of copies for preserving Korean film heritages and if copies of non-commercial films are to be submitted, a fair compensation should be paid for this. In reality, however, nearly no copies of non-commercial films have been submitted for their preservation. Of course, the reason can be said to be that the purpose of such efforts has not been publicized properly in a way, but the problem is that even if the KOFA induces the submission of copies, independent film producers showed a low degree of response because their recognition of the preservation is still low. In view of the social meaning that short and independent films have, the independent film producers' recognition should undergo a change for their systematic collection and preservation.

The preservation and protection of film heritages are not possible only by law and systems. Contribution and voluntary submission of copies are deemed to be important in collecting films. This should be supported by the recognition that their film creation could become a film heritage for the future, breaking free from one-time simple logic. In addition, if the KOFA functions as a stable screening space for non-commercial films through

cinematheque business, it will be positively recognized by producers of independent film. In addition, it should be provided with films, posters, handbills and other creative materials by people engaging in film producers and individual collectors and the source should be expanded to include foreign countries. In addition to preserving non-commercial films, the KOFA will have to have an assortment of foreign classical films like foreign film archives in order to become a central institution for visual education. This is also necessary for a smooth provision of programs implemented by many cinematheque bodies.

Films damaged chemically and physically like color faded, eroded, wrapped, swelled, and shrunk easily can lose its proper value. Therefore, the KOFA makes duplicates with relatively low-priced analog technology in case that it is urgent to make copies because films are damaged too severely or as a preparatory stage of digital restoration. Also with digital or analog technology it restores historic films so as to have quality better than or close to the original work. So far the KOFA has created dupe nega and master nega, and restored and duplicated them to extend the term of conservation. For films which are expected to be urgent to duplicate, it made a beginning for inspection.

- **Access, Curating & Programming**

Cinema is sometimes defined as the experience of audiences watching images projected on a large screen in a dark theater. Therefore, archives are guardians of an art form which should be preserved not only in its physical state, but also as a cinematic experience, which itself can be seen as a form of culture. For this reason, the responsibility of film archives is not limited to preserving and restoring film. As part of the watching experience, films should be available for public viewing. For film archives, the preservation of films which are being damaged and faded has been the priority task so far, but showing these films to the public has become a new one. For this reason, many foreign archives have their own screening space, and thus do the planning for the films kept by them, hold regular screening sessions and also conduct some education on films.

The Korean Film Archive offers a service which the public can access the institution's collections. There are several kinds of services, and some major policy-level restrictions on access. The first one is that public institutions and bodies, and academic societies can lend film prints only with non-profit purpose. The fee is \$ 15 for a reel of 35mm print, \$ 10 for a reel of 16mm print, and \$ 5 for a reel of 8mm print. Secondly, the

public can use reading room. However, it should be only for non-profit public purpose. The fee for both film and playing machines should be paid.

| | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|--|
| For films and video | Films | \$ 15 for one reel of 35mm print \$ 10 for one reel of 16mm print |
| | Videos | \$ 30 per a piece |
| For playing machines | Steenbeck | \$ 8 per 10 min. |
| | Beta Player | \$ 5 per 10 min |
| | DV, 1 ", U-Matic Player | \$ 3 per 10 min |

The Korean Film Archive offers copying service. It should be requested for non-profit public purpose and needs a written consent. The fee is very variable by the film and video types and quantities. Also this institute offers rental service of its cinematheque only for non-profit public purpose. There are three theaters with 307 seats, 150 seats and 50 seats. People can bring and see their own films in there as well. When people bring their films, the fee is \$ 180 for 120 min. film. And when people see films which this institute holds, the fee is \$ 270. Of course, the archive does its duty as a cinematheque. It has two kinds of theaters; Cinematheque KOFA and Classic Theater. The Cinematheque KOFA is not opened yet, it will open next April. The Classic Theater is for Korean classic films and independent films. There is individual on-site viewing service. The archive provides a service which people can watch DVD or VHS which were released in Korea or the KOFA

converted what it holds into. There isn't any major policy-level restriction on access except that only over-15-year-old people can use this service. Also people can use film reference library. It can be called as a film data bank. It has domestic and foreign videos, books, periodicals, theses, and screenplays. The KOFA also offers online VOD service. Korean classic films and independent films are charged, and some documentaries and PR moving images are free. This institute provides very special service. In Korea, there are over 800 movie theaters, but they are gathered in cities. So since 2001 as the name of 'Cinema on Wheels' the KOFA has tried to give filmic experience to people who can hardly meet with that experience because they live in countryside. It usually opens outdoor screenings or rent screens in organizations for social welfare.

- **Digital Preservation Issues**

Ultimately, the digitalizing work is to set the international standard and to make researchers and studiers have access to catalogs and digital images firsthand through internet. Now, the digital technology is essential for cataloging and documentation, the work of film archives. The digital technology used in cataloging work is becoming an

essential technology for setting up comprehensive database like building filmography of local movies including films in the possession of archives or those remaining, and enabling the public to get access to the filmography on-line.

How aged films were able to survive in film archives can be explained by advances in technology. The digital technology will also be accepted as being more important in that it will perform the function for prompting the access to myriads of visual data in the possession of film archives. In addition, this will enable high-quality service to be offered to users. Digital technology will be required for a variety of duties, but its final and most important objective should be to offer the cinematic experience as widely as possible.

For information age, since 1991 the Korean Film Archive has promoted an information-oriented business of all kinds of moving image data to impart cultural and historical heritage to coming generations. To play a role as a comprehensive moving image information center, the KOFA now promotes to establish an integrated service system, and by extension is proceeding step by step to build up a digital archive. It opens Korean Movie

Database (KMDb) and KOFA film school in 2006. Also this year it starts Korean film VOD service. As the business of the KMDb, the KOFA makes variable moving images and Korean films catalogs, and digitalizes Korean classic films. In KOFA film school, the KOFA makes on-line film lectures and makes audio-visual aids and e-book. Also it encodes off-line lectures to use them in on-line service, and made a contract with e-book website to distribute its contents.

- **Copyright, Legal Issues & Policy**

In KOFA's possession most of the collections of films on the visual data reading room's list which can be shown in DVD & video formats are DVDs & videos launched on the market. It can be seen that overseas film archives make readable copies available for people to see as much as they want within the archive. Of course, such work involves a primary issue--a substantial manpower and budget. But while overseas film archives which are a national agency have been lawfully commissioned by their governments to copy films for their preservation and use, the KOFA has not. Since it must enter into an individual agreement with copyright holders in each case and bear the costs to work on telecine, if it

fails to get a grasp of copyright holders, it can not take any action. In order to reproduce and copy films protected by the copyright, the KOFA signs such an individual agreement with copyright holders and performs such work at its costs. To solve such problem copyright registration system should be utilized in films, but the first thing to do is to identify whereabouts of copyrights. A film archive which is the only keeper of films should do such work. A department exclusively in charge of copyrights should be set up within the film archive and get a grasp of the status of copyrights of all films. And then it should produce catalogs and put in place a system for opening them to those who use the films. The Korean Film Archive should allow users' right to the maximum extent possible while protecting the interests of film copyright holders.

Bibliography

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Korean Film Archive website (<http://www.koreafilm.org>)