

Institution: University of East Anglia		
Unit of Assessment: 34 - Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management		
Title of case study: Gender and the Film Archive: Making Women Amateur Filmmakers Visible		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: Between 2010 and 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Melanie Williams	Professor	2009 – to present
Keith M. Johnston	Professor, East Anglian Film Archive Director	2008 – to present 2014 – 2016
Yvonne Tasker	Professor	1998 – 2020
Angela Graham	EAFA Manager	2014 – present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: Between 2015 and 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact <p>The project created the UK's first digitised and accessible collection of films made by ground-breaking women amateur filmmakers, via a partnership between UEA researchers, the East Anglian Film Archive (EAFA), the Institute of Amateur Cinematographers (IAC), Talking Pictures TV, and UK festival programmers and cinema exhibitors.</p> <p>Phase one of the project digitised the work of 48 pioneering women filmmakers, made 144 films accessible via a public-facing website, and screened them in cinemas and on national television, generating interest and raising awareness among multiple audiences.</p> <p>In phase two of the project, Film Archives UK (FAUK) commissioned the project team to prepare a report on national holdings of women filmmakers' work. Published in 2020, the report's recommendations have informed archival strategies and policies on how to increase the visibility of women filmmakers' work.</p>		
2. Underpinning research <p>The research project tackled three key issues:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The lack of a full curatorial record of the work of pioneering women filmmakers who worked outside the professional UK film industry between the 1920s and 1990s; 2. The need to increase access to the widest possible range of work by those filmmakers; 3. The absence of women filmmakers from popular and academic film histories. <p>The work was needed due to two interlocking prejudices:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Women filmmakers at all levels of the British film industry are overlooked in histories of mainstream film labour and creativity; 2. Non-professional filmmaking outside the mainstream film industry, marginalised as 'amateur', is rarely written into those mainstream histories. <p>Non-professional women filmmakers are therefore rendered doubly invisible.</p> <p>Our research tackled this particular historical lacuna, revealing that these women's filmmaking work was creative, innovative, and highly varied, encompassing animations, comedies, documentaries, dramas, travelogues, and vivid scenes of local life which show a constantly changing Britain from the 1920s through the 1990s.</p> <p>Building on unit research strengths around women's labour within the British film industry (Williams: 3.2, 3.3, 3.4; Tasker: 3.5), and UK film archival work (Johnston: 3.1, 3.2), the project developed key curatorial and media partnerships to influence archival and curatorial practice across the UK, and make a parallel film history available to a wider public.</p> <p>Through an initial National Archives Cataloguing Fund grant (3.6), the project worked with the Institute of Amateur Cinematographers (IAC) to research and catalogue films from the IAC Film</p>		

Library where women played a significant creative role (director, producer, writer, or cinematographer). The collection included animation, fiction, and non-fiction film, offering a broader scope of filmmaking than that traditionally held by UK regional film archives. These films were digitised at EAFA through two GBP5,000 grants from the IAC (3.8) and support from the John & Joy Chittock Trust.

Discoveries include: the work of what appears to be the world's first all-woman film production unit (*Sally Sallies Forth*, Frances Lascot, 1928), and the first woman to win the *American Cinematographer* Grand Prize (*Doomsday*, Ruth Stuart, 1934), as well as documentary productions from Eunice Alliot and Laurie Day (working alongside their husbands), and the animated worlds of *An Odd Ode* (Mollie Butler, 1981) and *Michelangelo* (Sheila Graber, 1976).

Research revealed three core modes of women's amateur filmmaking practice (3.1):

1. Lone workers (often animators);
2. Small production units (e.g. regional cine-clubs);
3. Wife-and-husband filmmaking partnerships.

Researching, curating, and digitising these films not only generated new knowledge about the growth and development of women's creative labour within the amateur movement but also provided an extensive visual record of diverse women's lives across the 20th century, in terms of the content, themes, and different creative approaches taken by their films.

The academic and curatorial research has been presented in public, at conferences, screenings, exhibitions, and via podcasts. The research team's expertise, and the guidance they are able to offer for future research and projects, has been acknowledged by the national film archive organisation, Film Archives UK, who commissioned the team to conduct a survey of UK archive holdings of women filmmakers and draw up recommendations on making their work more visible and accessible (3.2).

3. References to the research

3.1 'Making Women Amateur Filmmakers Visible: Reclaiming Women's Work through the Film Archive'.

Sarah Hill & **Keith M. Johnston** *Women's History Review* vol. 29, no. 5: 875-889. (2020)
DOI: 10.1080/09612025.2019.1703541.

3.2 Invisible Innovators: Making Women Filmmakers Visible Across the UK Film Archives.

FAUK-commissioned report. (saved on file at the UEA)

Stephanie Clayton, **Keith M. Johnston**, and **Melanie Williams** (2020)
filmarchives.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Invisible-Innovators.pdf

3.3 'The Girl You Don't See: Julie Harris and the Costume Designer in British Cinema'.

Melanie Williams. *Feminist Media History* vol. 2, no. 2: pp.71-106. (2016) DOI: 10.1525/fmh.2016.2.2.71

3.4 'Women in the British Film Industry' in *Directory of World Cinema: Britain*.

Melanie Williams, eds: E, Bell and N, Mitchell, pp. 28-34. *Bristol: Intellect*. (2012)
ISBN: 978 1 84150557 2

3.5 'Vision and Visibility: Women Filmmakers, Contemporary Authorship and Feminist Film Studies' in *Reclaiming the Archive: Feminism and Film History*.

Yvonne Tasker, eds: V, Callahan. *Wayne State University Press*. (2010) pp. 213-230. ISBN: 978-0814333006

Grant funding

3.6 PI: **A. Graham**. *Women Film Makers from the Institute of Amateur Cinematographers' Collection*. National Archives, National Cataloguing Grants Programme for Archives. Grant value: GBP8,250. Project dates: 2014-2015.

3.7 PI: **K. Johnston**. *Raising the Profile of British Women Amateur Filmmakers*. Arts and Humanities Research Council, Cultural Engagement Fellowship. Grant value: GBP11,908. Project date: 2016.

3.8 PI: **K. Johnston**. Institute of Amateur Cinematographers, Digitisation grant. Grant value: GBP5,000. Project dates: 04/2014 - 05/2015.

PI: **K. Johnston**. *Women Amateur Filmmakers in Britain: Cultural Engagement*. Institute of Amateur Cinematographers. Grant value: GBP5,000. Project dates: 05/2016 - 06/2016

4. Details of the impact

The 'Women Amateur Filmmakers' (WAF) project set out to achieve three key impact objectives:

- 1) Initiate and escalate public access to a range of audio-visual works from those women filmmakers;
- 2) Increase popular and institutional awareness of women amateur filmmakers and provide models for wider use in making women's screen work more visible;
- 3) Influence and initiate change within the curatorial and institutional practices of film and media archives.

1) Impact on public access to the films

The project created the UK's first catalogue of women non-professional filmmakers, working in concert with the East Anglian Film Archive (EAFA) and the Institute of Amateur Cinematographers (IAC). This also created the largest single digital collection of films catalogued for the IAC:

"I cannot think of a better way of honouring our predecessors" (IAC chairman, 5.1).

"UEA's dedicated management of the project [acts] as a curtain-raiser to further availability ... of the Institute's collections" (IAC Archivist, 5.1).

Our intention to create multiple opportunities for public access and awareness-raising around these films focused on three elements: a) online, b) cinema and exhibition-based screenings, and c) television broadcast.

a) Online access: 144 films were catalogued, digitised, and added to the East Anglian Film Archive website: collectively, these pages have received **17,049 views**. The Top 10 films (by views) were watched **over 800 times** on average (**5.2a**).

Carol Morley's online film club: During the 2020 COVID lockdown, British filmmaker Carol Morley selected one of the project films, *Doomsday* (Ruth Stuart, 1934), to screen as part of her final online #fridayfilmclub (31 July 2020):

"I loved how Doomsday caught the pure excitement of filmmaking! So many ideas and precious moments" (Carol Morley, 5.3).

b) National cinema, exhibition, and online screenings

i) Cinemas: films have been screened across the UK at Arts Picturehouse (Cambridge), BFI Southbank (London), Cinema City (Norwich), Hippodrome (Bo'ness), HOME (Manchester), Prince Charles Cinema (London), Showroom (Sheffield), Watershed (Bristol). The films have also played at the Cinema Rediscovered festival (Bristol), the Flatpack film festival (Birmingham), the Borderlines film festival (Herefordshire, Shropshire, Malvern, and the Welsh Borders), the 'Sisters of Silents' event (Reel Connections CIC, Norwich), the Kinokulture film festival (Oswestry) and the Gateway film festival (Peterborough). There were special live performances of three silent films from the collection with newly composed soundtracks at the Cinema Museum (London) and The Assembly House (Norwich).

ii) Exhibitions: films from the WAF collection were used in different UK multi-media exhibitions: Reel Lives (London College of Communication / University of Arts London, 21 January-13 February 2019) showed nine films on permanent loop across the run of the exhibition; 40 Years of Archives (The Forum, Norwich, 1-27 August 2016) screened a package of eleven films on rotation.

c) Television broadcasts: eleven films from the collection have been screened multiple times on Talking Pictures TV since 2019. The UK's leading archival film channel, its audience has regularly exceeded 6,000,000 viewers per week (5.4):

"The shorts are always well received. Bringing these films to an audience who would not have access to watch them otherwise is so very important to us, and the memories they evoke. We receive countless e-mails from carers of patients with dementia and care homes who all shout about the importance of these shorts ... to their partners, patients, residents."

What is also encouraging is the younger demographic enjoying these shorts – so a new audience, much younger, is getting access to them when they may not think to look online" (Talking Pictures TV, 5.4).

2) Impact on popular and institutional awareness and audiences

The combined audience through the different activities above represents a significant increase in the level of public awareness of these women filmmakers, their films, and the historical contribution they have made to British film culture.

The broader historical value of the collection was noted by the UK's premier film magazine *Sight & Sound*, which described it as containing

"unexpected gems ... startlingly ambitious, stylish and varied" (5.5).

Ongoing audience assessment of the films, via comments at screenings and via social media channels, has been overwhelmingly positive (5.2b, 5.2c):

- ***"Every female filmmaker needs to see these – how inspiring"***
- ***"I'm impressed at how good they are, what pioneers"***
- ***"The filmmakers were very talented ... [I enjoyed] the variety, the humour, and the period features"***
- ***"the 'All Done by Electricity' educational film is a 'delight'"***
- ***"What a fantastic little film. A great example of a documentary / drama hybrid and how the director can manipulate the truth! Wonderful"***
- ***"my mind is blown Ruth Stuart was a teenager ... 19 when she made this? That's so cool"***
- ***"So innovative ... I'm blown away"***
- ***"Thanks, would never have seen this otherwise"***.

3) Curatorial and institutional impact

Due to the success of the Women Amateur Filmmakers project, Film Archives UK (FAUK) – the sectoral body representing British screen archives – commissioned the project team to conduct an extensive mapping exercise of collections relating to women filmmakers held in UK film and media archives. The first thorough investigation of the extent of UK screen archive holdings, it revealed another 110 women filmmakers, and over 2000 new film titles:

"an impactful report that highlights the value of screen heritage and its potential to reveal new knowledge about the UK's film culture and history ... The data will allow us to spotlight significant women filmmakers across the UK film archives ... [and] helped us to identify barriers to access and common collection requirements ... across the sector" (FAUK Chair, 5.6).

The publication and dissemination of physical copies of the report was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which closed all UK film and media archives. However, the digital publication of the report via FAUK's website has already had an impact on multiple institutions and archives:

[The report's] "deep-rooted research and archival mapping ... heighten[s] the visibility of those who may not fall within more historic lines of cataloguing, collection and curation ... what is really important about the study is the noted ways in which creative and archival practices interrelate" (British Film Institute Senior Curator, 5.7).

[The report] ***“raised the profile of women filmmakers in our collection by placing them in a wider UK context ... to have concrete research done into this area is so valuable”*** (National Library of Scotland-Moving Image Archive, 5.8).

The report recommended revisions to future curatorial and public access, advocating for the introduction of new metadata terms and standards, and the use of metadata to highlight women’s work within collections:

“The report has reinvigorated our determination to reveal ‘hidden women’ in our catalogue ... records are being revisited ... We support the recommendations in the report ... from a purely practical point of view the report has helped with everyday archival work ... we are now more likely to create more varied opportunities to explore the catalogue, such as curated collections” (National Library of Scotland-Moving Image Archive Curator, 5.8).

“The Invisible Innovators report is particularly useful in that it ... makes practical recommendations for ways other archives can emphasise female contributions through a range of exhibition and cataloguing strategies ... the IFI is planning to review its access and cataloguing policies and procedures, as suggested by Invisible Innovators, in order to highlight women’s contribution in all sectors of moving-image production” (IFI Irish Film Archive Head, 5.9).

In addition, the project has been seen as an example of best practice for the curation of collections of women’s films by external film organisations:

“The Women Amateur Filmmaker project has been a really amazing resource for us as curators ... The work that [WAF] has done in collecting, preserving and making such work accessible to audiences, researchers and curators is therefore invaluable if we are to understand better the wider history of female filmmakers ...

The mission and thinking behind the project is perfectly aligned with our objectives ... to bring attention to gaps in the archive, to restore women’s stories to their rightful place at the heart of film history and to raise awareness of the brilliant range of films available to screen in our collections ... this report is a great, easy to read and accessible introduction to amateur filmmaking as part of that wider conversation” (Invisible Women organisation, 5.10).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 5.1 Testimonials from Institute of Amateur Cinematographers Chairman; IAC Treasurer / Archivist
- 5.2 (a) EAFA Website statistics (2016-2020); (b) Audience feedback [Excel spreadsheet and/or individual postcard responses]; (c) Social media feedback (via Twitter, Facebook)
- 5.3 Twitter comments from Carol Morley, filmmaker
- 5.4 Testimonial from Talking Pictures TV
- 5.5 *Sight & Sound* article, June 2016
- 5.6 Testimonial from Film Archives UK Chair
- 5.7 Testimonial from Senior Curator of Special Collections, British Film Institute
- 5.8 Testimonial from Curator, National Library of Scotland-Moving Image Archive
- 5.9 Kassandra O’Connell (Head of Irish Film Archive), ‘Archivally Absent? Female Filmmakers in the IFI Irish Film Archive’, *Alphaville* 20 (2021): doi.org/10.33178/alpha.20.02
- 5.10 Testimonial from co-founder, ‘Invisible Women’ organisation