Digitisation of films and selection of films for digitisation from the perspective of users[1]

María-Ángeles López-Hernández

School of Communication, University of Seville, Spain

alhernan@us.es

Francisco-Javier Muñoz-García

School of Psychology, University of Huelva, Spain

fjgarcia@uhu.es

Rubén Domínguez-Delgado

School of Communication, University of Seville, Spain

rdd@us.es

Abstract

Purpose. The selection of films that archivists carry out today has an important impact on the future configuration of digitalised and virtually accessible film collections. Given the responsibility that this task entails, we consider it interesting to explore what the different profiles of the users of film archives think about selection and digitisation of films.

Approach/Methodology/Design. To this end, structured interviews were conducted with 31 subjects belonging to four groups of users: film researchers, film professionals, journalists/film critics, and last year audio-visual communication undergraduates from the University of Seville.

Findings. The most notable results, which do not differ in essence from what is known in the archival field, include, on the one hand, the unanimous view that digitisation is an effective way of conserving audio-visual memory and fostering public interest in film collections and archives and, on the other, that when films have to be selected for their digitisation, this should be done following rigorous and systematic selection criteria, thus avoiding the detrimental effects of random methods. Lastly, some future research lines are offered.

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Originality/Value. All the bibliography consulted view topics relating to film selection and digitisation exclusively through the prism of archival and library and information sciences. Namely, these studies are restricted to these specific areas of knowledge and aimed at professionals and experts in the field. For that reason, it may be interesting to explore other viewpoints and perspectives that go beyond purely technical, theoretical or methodological approach to film curation.

KEYWORDS: archival selection of films, film archives, film archiving, film digitisation, film librarianship

1. Introduction

Digitisation provides an opportunity to socially promote film archives, giving them a new dimension in terms of disseminating cultural content and enriching the education of the public. Film archives are more than mere repositories where old films slowly gather dust. They serve as windows into the history of the past century, allowing for research, observation, understanding, learning and the preservation of audio-visual memories from various cultures. It warrants recalling that, back in 1980, UNESCO had already outlined a *Recommendation for the Safeguarding and Preservation of Moving Images*, which included the general principle that "access should be made available as far as possible to the works and information sources represented by moving images which are acquired, safeguarded and preserved by public and private non-profit-making institutions" (UNESCO 1980, 169).

1.1. Current situation of digitisation in film archives

In a relatively short period, the world has become digitised, including the cultural industries such as cinema, where film production, distribution and screening are adapting to the new virtual era (López-Golán 2016). An example of this is the Digital Cinema Initiatives (DCI) standard (Izquierdo 2010; Paz 2011; García Casado and Alberich-Pascual 2014). DCI is a consortium founded in 2002 by the seven largest US film studios, arising from the need to fill the gap that has existed up to now in terms of regulations relating to digital cinema. In 2005, the DCI published its first recommendations for digital films with technical specifications on file format, transmission, storage and projection (Digital Cinema Initiatives 2022). In this context, film archives are gradually transitioning, albeit somewhat belatedly, towards the digitisation of their collections. Some of the reasons for this delay include issues related to film copyright status, the considerable cost that their mass digitisation involves, the expenses associated with curating and safeguarding digitised films, the need for sophisticated tools to manage complex metadata for online dissemination in large collections, the human resources necessary for digitising collections and, lastly, the high cost of disseminating film collections via telecommunication networks (despite the availability of more affordable networks). These challenges arise due to limited investment and scant budgets allocated to certain film archives, such as the regional Spanish ones.

In light of these circumstances, it is logical that professional film archivists and researchers are sceptical when it comes to undertaking the digitisation of film collections at the speed that other social, economic and/or cultural activities have done.

For this reason, to expedite digitisation, we considered that it could be interesting to know the opinion of film archive users connected to the world of cinematography, so that they could provide valuable perspectives on which collections should be prioritized for digitisation, why and how. These opinions can contribute to enriching the existing knowledge among archivists.

As observed by different Spanish researchers (Aguilar Alvear and López de Prado 2006; Cox 2011; Del Amo and Fernández 2012; García Casado and Alberich-Pascual 2014), the country's film archives should think digitally, adopt a holistic vision and develop strategies that catch the attention of users and engage them with more social and creative proposals. Currently, most of the 16 Spanish regional film archives are not implementing such approaches. In sum, in order to overcome this situation, there is a need for a paradigm shift, with the adoption of new ways of considering and managing film documents (Enticknap 2007; López de Solís and Martín López 2011; Fossati 2011; Kaufman 2013; López Yepes 2014; Domínguez-Delgado and López-Hernández 2016a, 2016b).

In addition, the new digital paradigm in the film industry has also left its mark on film archives which, "even though they initially expressed their doubts about introducing new digital formats […], have ultimately embraced digital technology, mainly accepting and converting the DCP (Digital Cinema Package) and DCDM (Digital Cinema Distribution Master) formats into the equivalents of original cinematographic works" (García Casado 2016, 94). These two formats supported by Digital Cinema Initiatives (DCI), include DCP for digital copies sent and projected in cinemas, and DCDM as a set of original files used to make all the copies for digital cinema projection (FIAF 2010, 2). As stated by García Casado and Alberich-Pascual (2015, 6), "at present, all film archives already accept the deposit of digital audio-visual works under the DCI system, applying the analogy of conserving the works in their original format."

Charo López, of the Spanish Film Archive, considers that network distribution of films is the most efficient but also the most complex system:

> "Depending on its character, it can be free or commercial and have a limited (Intranet) or open (Internet) distribution. At the moment, it has been decided to host digital collections on the corporate Intranet and to make them available to the public as rights to them are secured. Meanwhile, access to them involves offering the database in which they are registered, submitting an official application and paying the appropriate fees. These formalities could be simplified by allowing users to complete them online and by establishing institutional agreements." (López 2022, 4-5)

Film digitisation projects, whether international (UNESCO 2015; Domínguez-Delgado and López-Hernández 2020), national (Government of Spain 2022a, 2022b) or even regional (Andalusian Film Archive – Andalusian regional government), highlight the need for safeguarding cultural heritage by digitising public and private collections, which would consequently enable users to consult them online. Two notable examples are the *European Film Gateway* (EFG), with more than 40 European film archives currently participating (European Union 2023), linked to the *Europeana* initiative (European Union 2022), and the Andalusian Film Archive's *Mi vida* project (Filmoteca de Andalucía 2022).

As Spanish film archives are adapting to this new virtual reality, so is the government of Spain. So much so that in November 2022, the Ministry of Culture and Sports approved the allocation of over €10 million for the project of digitising the collections of the Spanish Film Archive, within the framework of Section 24, "Enhancing the cultural industry", of *The Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan* (Government of Spain 2021). In the words of the Minister of Culture and Sports, Miquel Iceta, "Without memory there is no future" (Government of Spain 2022, para. 1), referring to the need to preserve film collections.

1.2. Selection for the digitisation and digital preservation of film collections

Having said that, one of the first problems that film archives with reduced budgets and even more limited human resources may have to solve in their way towards digitisation is deciding which documents should be digitised first, while ensuring a balance between the quantity and quality of film resources available on the Web. The digitisation of film collections should not under any circumstances run the risk of becoming a mere programmatical concern listed in the archives policies. It would be negligent to overlook the fact that an incorrect selection of films could subsequently have a negative impact on audio-visual memory, similar to those in the first decades of the 20th century – for instance, the loss of more than 80 per cent of world film production between 1895 and 1915 (Borde 1991, 18).

Despite the evident importance of this archival process, the literature on film selection is by no means plentiful. Few researchers have devoted their time to studying such a necessary archival process. Whereas some, like Sam Kula (1983, 1990, 2002), have thoroughly analysed the matter, others – the majority – have only skimmed over such a delicate, controversial and complex issue (Kuiper 1980; Schou 1993; Houston 1994; Edmondson 1995, 2002; Walters 1996; Aguilar Alvear and López de Prado 2006).

Evidently, not all archival footage can be digitised for a number of reasons (Kula 1983; Heredia 1989; Romero Tallafigo 1994; López-Hernández 1996, 1999, 2001; López-Hernández and Domínguez-Delgado 2018). These reasons include, as already noted, the sheer number of collections housed in film archives, the lack of human resources to perform such a herculean task, the fact that film archives lack the necessary tools for mass film digitisation, digital storage problems and so forth. Additionally, as rightly observed by Kula (1990, 2002), even when it is indeed possible to apply new digital coding technologies, there is a need to continue to implement assessment policies and procedures to prevent film archives from collapsing under the sheer weight of footage and future researchers from drowning in a sea of superfluous and trivial films. Although there is no official definition of the concept of archival selection, there does seem to be a clear consensus on the meaning of the term. In fact, an analysis of the definitions proposed by some authors (Spiller 1980; Venugopal and Reddy 1991; Guinchat 1992; Hernández Pérez 1992; Vázquez 1994; Cid Leal 1995; López-Hernández 1999; Hidalgo Goyanes 2003; Giménez Rayo 2007) reveals two groups of keywords:

- On the one hand, there is talk of "evaluating", "assessing", "choosing", "filtering" and "differentiating,"
- and, on the other, there is reference to selection "principles", "criteria" and "parameters".

Thus, the term "selection" suggests generalizations about the nature of documents. It is based on the conviction that the selectable documents have "merits" while the eliminable ones have "demerits", whether of a physical nature or linked to their content, utility or testimonial interest, thus reducing their value. However, what are the characteristics that make some films more relevant than others?

Attempts have been made to answer this question since the very beginnings of cinema. Bolesław Matuszewski (Domínguez-Delgado and López-Hernández 2019), Henri Langlois and Ernest Lindgren pondered on whether or not all films should be preserved. The arguments that Langlois – co-founder of the French Cinématèque in 1936 and co-founder of the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) in 1938 – deployed in his time to contend that they should are reasonable enough, but unpractical in view of the current state of the art of film digitisation (Borde 1991). On the contrary, we are currently compelled to support the thesis formulated by the Polish filmmaker Matuszewski (1898a, 1898b) who, at the end of the nineteenth century, defended the need to select, according to their historical value, the film documents destined to form part of the Historical Cinematographic Archive, which, he had suggested, should be created in Paris. Lindgren – the first film archivist to dwell on operational and methodological matters (Enticknap 2007), being considered by the FIAF (2023) more pragmatic, although perhaps not as romantic as Langlois – for whom the selection of moving images was an essential aspect, would deploy the same argument. According to Lindgren (1954), the relevance of films essentially lay in their artistic and aesthetic value. To these selection criteria, the UNESCO added, to its 1980 recommendations, the cultural and educational value of moving images (Item 10 – Legal and administrative measures):

> "Those moving images which, because of their educational, cultural, artistic, scientific and historical value, form part of a nation's cultural heritage should be retained on a priority basis. Any system introduced to this end should foresee that selection should be based on the broadest possible consensus of informed opinion and should take particular account of the appraisal criteria established by the archival profession." (UNESCO 1980, 166)

Since then, some experts in film archives have drawn up more of less long lists of criteria governing the selection of films (Kula 1983, 1990, 2002; Schou 1993; Edmondson 1995, 2002; Harrison 1997a, 1997b; Malden, 1998, 2002; López-Hernández 1999; Iáñez 2013; Rosengren 2019). In summary, one could say that this debate, initiated more than a century ago, has resurfaced with the digitisation of film collections. However, the problem lies in the fact that there is still no clear consensus on the selection criteria that should be followed.

2. Objectives

All the bibliography consulted, some of which are listed below in the references, view topics relating to film selection and digitisation exclusively through the prism of archival and library and information sciences. These studies are restricted to these specialised areas of knowledge and aimed at professionals and experts in the field. For that reason, it may be interesting to explore other visions, perspectives that go beyond a purely technical, theoretical or methodological approach to film curation, as suggested by Nuño Moral and Cal-

dera Serrano (2000, 24): "It is necessary to attach greater importance to the role played by users with the aim of identifying their real needs and improving document management."

Thus, the working hypothesis here is that, in order to improve film collections management, it is also essential to gather opinions from outside academia to gain a better understanding of the nature of film selection and digitisation with regard to the perspective of users when searching film archives. Archivists should strive to respond to users' needs in the best possible way and implement the necessary mechanisms for decision-making. This is crucial considering the repercussions that modern moving image management techniques have for the future creation of virtual film collections.

The information looked for could be specified in the following two objectives:

- On the one hand, to identify different impressions, beyond archival science, of people linked to the film field and potential users of film archives as regards the digitisation of film archives in the virtual era.
- On the other hand, to uncover the views, criteria or priorities of film-savvy users who have no direct association with archival science, concerning the selection of film collections, involving them when deciding on which films should be prioritized for digitisation by Spanish public film archives.

In conclusion, the intention here is to identify the principal reflections and arguments of individuals who are not directly involved in the daily problems faced by film archives, regarding film document selection and digitisation.

3. Methodology

The purpose of this study was to gather personal opinions of users of film archives, not absolute truths, about whether or not it is important to digitise film collections for their virtual dissemination among the users, and whether or not it is appropriate to select the collections to be digitised and, if so, following what criteria or parameters.

To this end, structured interviews (Chu & Ke 2017, 289), a commonly used data collection technique in archival science, were employed as the methodology. In the interviews, which were conducted online, each interviewee answered a series of questions, always posed in the same order, for the purpose of constructing a sufficiently robust conceptual framework for the two main issues addressed in this study: firstly, the digitisation of film collections, and secondly, the selection of some of these collections for a priority digitisation.

Fully aware that structured interviews conducted with individuals outside the specific field of archival science and film archives – although all of them had knowledge about films and were potential users of these archives – may have limitations. These limitations include, among others, the interviewees' subjective responses and potential gaps in providing certain types of information. However, it was considered that this was the only method capable of yielding useful data from which to draw inferences – such as the importance attributed to film archives, the interviewees' interest in each of their collections, or their opinion about which ones should be prioritized for digitisation .

The sample consisted of 31 interviewees, all collaborating voluntarily and altruistically in

the research, grouped together in 4 profiles of users: 8 researchers in the field of cinematography, 8 professionals working in the film industry (directors, editors, scriptwriters and set designers), 7 journalists and film critics, and, lastly, 8 final-year undergraduate students in audio-visual communication with a sufficient level of academic training in cinematography (included in the field of knowledge of "cultural industries: design, animation, cinematography and audio-visual production").

The selection of this sample linked to the world of audio-visual production was not accidental. It was believed that, owing to their academic and professional training, as well as to their personal interest in the world of cinema, they would appreciate the value of moving images and, therefore, would be particularly responsive when talking openly about such a thorny issue as the importance of the selection, preservation and virtual dissemination of the country's moving image heritage.

The final methodological step involved a qualitative and comparative analysis of the data collected from the interviews. This analysis was conducted in two stages:

- Firstly, reviewing the opinions gathered.
- Secondly, structuring and organizing the data thematically to enhance understanding in the following categories, in line with the questions posed:
    1. Should film collections be digitised?
    2. Should all or only some film collections be digitised?
    3. What are the risks posed by the selection of archival footage?
    4. Should film archives follow a scientific archival selection method?
    5. Which selection criteria should film archivists preferably follow?
    6. Which film genres should be given priority in such a selection process?

4. Results

It should be noted that the intention here was to understand the way in which different researchers, professionals, journalists/critics and undergraduate students, none of them belonging to archival science, perceive and understand film digitisation, as well as the task of selection that underlies this digital adaptation in film archives.

In order to meet the two research objectives, the results obtained have been structured in two main sections: the first referring to film digitisation and the second to archival selection criteria.

4.1. Film digitisation

For the sake of convenience, this section is divided into two subsections: the first, on whether film collections should be digitised; the second, on whether all or only some film collections should be digitised.

4.1.1. Should film collections be digitised?

Of the 31 interviewees, 29 (representing 93.55% of the sample) believed that film archives should digitise their collections. The most frequent replies of the researchers, film professionals, journalists/critics and students, listed in descending order, were as follows:

1. Film collections should be digitised to prevent the irreparable loss of films of tremendous archival and informative value, for many of those preserved in analogue formats (celluloid reels or magnetic tapes) could deteriorate to the point of becoming unintelligible in the future.
2. Digitisation is an effective way of conserving audio-visual memory, thus preventing the irreparable loss of films of tremendous archival and informative value.
3. The digitisation of film collections would stimulate public interest in them, as well as giving visibility to many cinematographic works currently forgotten or unknown.
4. The fact that the films preserved in these public institutions were not "accessible to the public" on the Internet was anachronistic in the digital era. Both researchers and film professionals should have quick and easy access to the films preserved in film archives on digital platforms, particularly in view of the fact that not all the regions of Spain have film archives, for which reason visiting the existing ones to consult film collections is sometimes costly, arduous and time-consuming. This is illustrated by López de Solís and Martín (2011, 659) when stating that "online open access to the collections of many film archives would enhance film productions because they could serve as sources of inspiration".
5. There were many references to copyright status as an obstacle for the public dissemination of the film documents preserved in film archives. In the opinion of 19 interviewees (representing 61.29% of the sample), however, that status should not hamper online open access to the collections of film archives, provided that the purpose was purely educational or cultural, and never commercial. In this respect, one of the female filmmakers interviewed noted that "public film archives should be comparable to public libraries, which offer open and free access to their bibliographic collections". Moreover, another seven interviewees (2 researchers, 3 film professionals and 2 students) agreed that film archives could generate revenues by charging a symbolic fee for each viewing or download. These resources could then be used to restore films, digitising them and, in turn, paying copyright holders royalties. So, access to films would be protected on the websites of film archives by passwords and other restrictions on the reproduction of the films hosted on them.
6. Lastly, two students (representing 6.45% of the sample) thought it was unnecessary to digitise film collections or to make them available on virtual platforms, for they were of the opinion that, as with other historical archives, whoever needed to consult this material could always pay a personal visit to the institution in question.

4.1.2. Should all or only some film collections be digitised?

Eleven of the interviewees (35.48%), including 7 researchers and 4 journalists, were of the opinion that film collections should be selected for digitisation for the following reasons:

1. It was utopian to believe that all audio-visual productions could be preserved in the long run, in view of the fact that they were increasing exponentially every year.

2. It was impossible for film archives to digitise all their collections because of the high cost involved, together with the scant financial support that they received for this purpose.
3. The digitisation of all the collections could end up saturating the films search and retrieval system, thus making it impracticable.

Conversely, 10 of the interviewees (29.03%), including 8 film professionals, 1 film critic and 1 student argued that the work of film archives consisted in conserving audio-visual memory and, accordingly, film archivists should not be assigned the task of deciding on which films should be selected for digitisation and which should not. "Even more so," one of the editors commented, "when we know that those documents that are discarded and, therefore, continue to be preserved in their original format, will only survive while there are machines that allow us to reproduce their content." Also, in this regard, a student declared that "digitisation depends to a great extent on the human, technical and budget resources of each film archive. Whenever feasible, all film collections should be digitised."

Seen in perspective, this dichotomy between researchers and professionals could be explained by the fact that both protected their own interests. It can be inferred that, whereas the film professionals did not want their productions to be excluded from the digitisation process because of the consequences that this might have for their future careers and long-term preservation of their films, the researchers were more interested in film archives digitising preferably those films that would most likely form the basic corpus of their studies and analyses at some moment in their careers, owing to the fact that they were film canons.

Lastly, the rest of the interviewees, 10 in total (32.26%), including 7 students and 3 journalists, did not express a clear opinion on whether all collections or only some of them should be digitised.

4.2. Selection in film digitisation

The second topic explored had to do with how film archives should undertake the delicate task of selecting films for digitisation. The interviewees' responses are grouped into four subsections:

1. What are the risks posed by the selection of archival footage?
2. Should film archives follow a scientific archival selection method?
3. Which selection criteria should film archivists preferably follow?
4. Which film genres should be given priority in such a selection process?

4.2.1. What are the risks posed by the selection of archival footage?

The replies to this question were very varied and basically fell into two categories: "personal perspective", referring to film archivists themselves; and "methodological perspective", referring to selection criteria.

As to the first perspective, for 22 interviewees (70.97%), including 6 researchers, 5 film professionals, 7 journalists/film critics and 4 students, leaving the selection of films in the

hands of film archivists could be "risky", given that, as with all individuals, they could be influenced by many subjective factors when deciding on which films should be selected for digitisation and which should not. The most frequently mentioned subjective factors included the following:

1. Political ideologies
2. Social stereotypes and prejudices
3. Religious beliefs
4. Personal tastes
5. Resorting to intuition
6. Succumbing to the influence of film trends
7. A lack of experience in selecting films

In this regard, one of the students declared: "That is why the same document can be selected by one archivist and discarded by another, which is unacceptable in such a decisive process for the future of film collections as their selection, for what is not digitised today will hardly be digitised in the future, which could lead to the neglect of many of the films sitting on the shelves of film archives".

With regard to the second perspective, for nine of the interviewees (29.03%), most of whom were film professionals, the risks posed by the selection of archival footage had nothing to do with film archivists but with the selection process itself. Some of the reasons that they gave included the following:

1. Subjectivity does not have to be seen as a negative or perverse factor. In view of the uncertainty or dilemma as to whether a film document should be selected or not, film archivists should resort to common sense. Applying solely criteria considered as *objective* could also occasionally pervert the selection process.
2. The selection criteria currently employed might be invalid in the future. The socio-political context, new artistic and aesthetic tendencies, technological evolution and even legislative changes at a national or European level could affect such criteria. Therefore, they could not be regarded as timeless standards. An argument also deployed by Uricchio (1995, 262) to warn against considering modern selection criteria as fixed and immutable, who claimed, when referring specifically to "artistic-aesthetic value", "Those films that are lost because they do not adapt to current aesthetic canons will be sorely missed in the future. And even though it were a simple task for future researchers to evaluate our archival values and criteria, it would be extraordinarily difficult for them to evoke films that no longer existed."
3. Selection criteria should not be seen as rigid or entrenched elements, like atoms, but rather as variable and unstable ones. According to Mayntz, Holm and Hübner (1993, 14), "Assessment is absolutely determined by culture, being historically variable in its direction and intensity, while it can also vary for different groups of society".
4. The digital boom could alter some current selection criteria, making them obsolete, like, for example, the "possibility of exchange," "preservation status," "geographical proximity" and even "copyright status" thanks to the growing number of people defending Creative Commons (CC) licenses, gradually resulting in the consolidation of this open and public dissemination system.

4.2.2. Should film archives follow a scientific archival selection method?

All the interviewees, except for one of the students, strongly believed that film archives should follow a scientific archival selection method to undertake such an important task for conserving audio-visual memory, thus echoing the comment that Romero Tallafigo (1994, 296) made in one of his works: "Irresponsibility when selecting or eliminating documents should always come up against an obstacle, which is none other than a good method that establishes protective measures against thoughtlessness and subjectivism."

There were more discrepancies as to whether each film archive should apply its own selection method in terms of its objectives and collections (the majority opinion shared by 19 interviewees) or whether all film archives should follow the same one.

4.2.3. Which selection criteria should film archivists preferably follow?

By individually analysing and organising the selection criteria suggested by the 31 interviewees and focusing on the fact that there were significant relationships between specific criteria (for instance, the "preservation status of the film" and the "degree of wear of the format"), it was considered that they could be included under a more generic label so as to avoid unnecessary duplications. It should also be specified that some of the interviewees mentioned certain criteria more often, resulting in the total number of opinions greater than 31.

Thus, the most frequent replies by the interviewees, listed in descending order, were essentially as follows:

1. The "most critically acclaimed films" or "films winning awards at international festivals", mentioned by 10 interviewees (4 students, 4 researchers and 2 journalists) representing 32.26% of the sample.
2. "Sociological and anthropological value", a criterion mentioned by 8 interviewees (2 researchers, 3 film professionals, 1 journalist and 2 students) – 25.81% of the sample.
3. "Historical value" (a keyword including all those selection criteria mentioned by the interviewees in reference to pioneering films of new artistic, technical or narrative tendencies, film genres or those considered to be unique, either because their directors, scriptwriters, actors or producers were very well known in the film industry or because they elicited an unprecedented reaction from the public, or due to any another circumstance that converted such films into "rarities"), a criterion singled out by 6 interviewees (19.35%), including 3 film professionals, 2 journalists and 1 student.
4. The "geographical scope of the film archive", a criterion mentioned by 5 interviewees (16.13%) – 2 researchers, 2 journalists and 1 film professional.
5. "Artistic and aesthetic value", a criterion specified by 3 interviewees (9.68%), including 1 researcher, 1 journalist and 1 film director.
6. The age of films was a criterion highlighted by 2 researchers, 1 film critic and 1 student, representing 6.45% of the sample.
7. The last criterion mentioned by 2 interviewees (6.45%), 1 researcher and 1 film professional, was the "preservation status" of films.

In addition to these selection criteria, there were others that were mentioned less frequently. For example, one of the students underscored the archival and/or evidentiary value of films: "I consider that all those film works that in the future will help to understand the past, to comprehend contemporary historical facts with a huge political and social impact, should be protected, disseminated and used as educational materials, in line with the adage that goes – "An image is worth a thousand words." In a similar vein, one of the researchers declared: "It is important to select different visions, paying due attention to content produced on/from the *margins.*"

A closer examination of the aforementioned criteria reveals that the majority of them (except for two: "critically acclaimed films" and "the oldest films") have also been singled out by several of the pioneers in research on film archiving and archival selection theory. For instance, the criteria "cultural-educational value", "artistic-aesthetic value", "historical value", "archival or evidentiary value", "geographical scope" and "sociological and anthropological value" have been mentioned by authors and institutions including Edmondson (1995, 2002), Harrison (1997a, 1997b), Kula (1983, 1990, 2002), Lindgren (1954), Malden (1998), Matuszewski (1898a, b) and UNESCO (1980).

This allows to confirm that the term "selection" is a social construct that already existed in the minds of individuals long before it came to be considered a task inherent to archival science. We all intuitively understand its meaning and tend to apply similar filters depending on the task that we have been assigned.

4.2.4. Which film genres should be given priority in such a selection process?

The last issue analysed was the film genres to which the interviewees would give priority when digitising film collections. Most of them – 23 (representing 74.19% of the sample), including 7 researchers, 6 film professionals, 6 journalists/film critics and 4 students – believed that the digitisation of non-fiction films should be prioritised, whereas for the rest – 8 (25.81%), including 1 researcher, 2 film professionals, 1 journalist and 4 students – fiction films should be the first concern.

The most frequently cited non-fiction genres were as follows: cinema newsreels (as in the case of the NODO collection in Spain – propaganda newsreels projected in Spanish cinemas under the Franco dictatorship), documentary films and home films. Broadly speaking, those advocating this option contended that public film archives should first digitise these films because they were those that most accurately reflected not only the political history of the Spanish people, but also their customs and social, economic, environmental, scientific, technological and cultural achievements, thus becoming a resource that, in the long run, would have a huge evidentiary and, consequently, educational value.

In this respect, one of the researchers observed: "By my reckoning, home films are particularly relevant because they may be the first to be lost, owing to the fact that less people are interested in their preservation, but, nonetheless, offer a relevant vision of reality; a more *accurate* picture. With regard to science fiction films, as there are producers, distributers and public or private organisations behind them, there may be more expedient ways of preserving them."

Likewise, two film directors and an editor also agreed on the need to digitise, firstly, the home film collections preserved in film archives, considering that domestic and family scenes constituted very valuable and unparalleled archival material from which scriptwriters and directors could draw inspiration for recreating them in their scripts and films. In the exact words of the

editor: "Film archives should place greater value on social history, on daily life. Furthermore, many commercial fiction films tend to have short lifecycles, linked to current fashions, and *age* badly. Archivists should have the ability to distinguish between transitory and timeless films." Beyond that archival or evidentiary value of non-fiction films, one of the film critics interviewed also stressed the need to prioritise the selection of films "for mere quantitative and balance reasons within the general history of film."

On the other hand, those 8 interviewees who recommended that priority be given to fiction films in the selection process usually claimed that from those films or series it was possible to infer the values, ideologies and beliefs not only of those responsible for making them (scriptwriters, directors, producers, etc.) but also of the society in which they had been made. Additionally, one of the researchers noted that those documents were a crucial source for learning about the artistic, plot and technical developments in the film industry since its beginnings.

5. Conclusions

The main conclusions drawn from the replies of the 31 interviewees, including researchers, film professionals, journalists/critics and students – none of whom are related to the world of film archiving, although they are potential users of film archives – are as follows:

1. The need for film archives to digitise their collections and to make them available on virtual platforms goes without saying. In short, film archives should not allow themselves to lag behind in adapting to the new virtual medium. As institutions tasked with safeguarding and disseminating audio-visual memory, they should strive to democratise film culture by ensuring that all citizens have access to their collections, overcoming barriers like, for instance, copyrights, through legislative changes or agreements with rights holders.
2. The decision on whether film archives should digitise all their collections or only part of them continues to be a controversial issue on which, by and large, there is still no consensus among the interviewed researchers in the field of cinema, on the one hand, and among interviewed film professionals, on the other. Whereas the former advocate the selection, the latter are against this, that is, excluding films when digitising and making collections available.

In the event that film archives consider that a selection process is required, the research participants generally point out that:

1. In light of the risks that a random and careless selection of films for digitisation poses, film archives should follow a scientific selection method that, on the one hand, mitigates the underlying problems of the possible subjectivity of archivists and, on the other, remedies the doubtless ephemeral character of the selection criteria.
2. When selecting films for digitisation, film archives should implement the following criteria, among others: their cinematographic impact, plus the sociological, anthropological, historical, artistic and aesthetic value that gives them an important archival and evidentiary role in each historical period.
3. In the selection of films for digitisation, priority should be given to non-fiction genres (newsreels, documentaries, home films, etc.) because they offer an accurate reflection

of the reality of their time and, in this sense, can serve not only as research resources in many fields of knowledge (cinema, history, anthropology, sociology, etc.) but also as sources of inspiration for period films.

Based on these findings, the following future lines of research are suggested:

1. Enquiring into strategies for engaging the users of film archives with more personal, social and creative proposals. For example, launching awareness raising campaigns highlighting the importance of film archives digitising their collections, totally or partially. The accent should also be placed on the very active involvement (as, in principle, an attempt has been made here) of professionals, experts, researchers and students with links not only to the film industry but also to other fields of knowledge with an interest in conserving audio-visual memory, as well as the citizenry and film buffs in general, all for the purpose of allowing them to contribute with their opinions and ideas to broaden the horizon of a discipline that has hitherto been the exclusive preserve of archivists and archival science researchers. By raising the social awareness of the citizenry as a whole, it would be easier to convince governments to fund film digitisation programmes.

2. Designing academic strategies aimed at lecturers and teachers who, using the film documents that film archives are gradually digitising and making available on the Web as educational materials, could involve their students in classwork so as to help them to appreciate the appeal of film archives, as well as enabling them to assimilate very valuable historical and sociocultural knowledge. This would not be hard considering that the younger generations are accustomed to consuming digital audio-visual content.

3. Lastly, exploring methodological and experimental strategies, such as proposing, in the framework of archival science, document selection methods specifically applicable to the film kind. The proposed models should be flexible and malleable, bearing in mind that, according to the interviewees, this is an essential, subjective and ephemeral task. In this regard, the website of the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA) has the following to say:

> "The term selection implies a procedure based on the general policy of the archive and certain criteria within the limits of the policy. What criteria can we establish without hampering future research and destroying recordings which, in a hundred years or more, could have become interesting or even indispensable? Are there methods to avoid disaster and to protect ourselves from blame by our successors? It is doubtful whether such criteria can be found but we should try to formulate a few points which can be applied without too much risk." (IASA 2022)

In summary, digitisation offers an opportunity to highlight and reinforce the social value of film archives, opening them up to a new dimension linked to the dissemination of cultural content that is educationally enriching for the citizenry. It is evident that digitisation can enhance the distinctive value of film archives, which should not forget the important social role that they must play, beyond safeguarding documents: the management and universal access to film heritage. As Charo López of the Spanish Film Archive contends: "It is necessary to guarantee that citizens have access to their own cultural heritage and, at the same time, to ensure its preservation for future generations" (López 2022, 14).

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Sažetak

Digitalizacija filmova i odabir filmova za digitalizaciju iz perspektive korisnika

Cilj. Odabir filmova za digitalizaciju u arhivima ima veliki utjecaj na buduće oblikovanje digitaliziranih i virtualno dostupnih filmskih zbirki. S obzirom na odgovornost koju taj zadatak nosi, smatramo zanimljivim istražiti što različiti profili korisnika filmskog arhiva misle o selekciji i digitalizaciji filmova.

Pristup/metodologija/dizajn. U tu su svrhu obavljeni strukturirani intervjui s 31 ispitanikom koji pripadaju četirima skupinama korisnika: filmskim istraživačima, filmskim profesionalcima, novinarima/filmskim kritičarima i prošlogodišnjim studentima audiovizualne komunikacije Sveučilišta u Sevilli.

Rezultati. Najvažniji rezultati, koji se zapravo ne razlikuju od onoga što je već poznato u području arhivistike, uključuju, s jedne strane, jedinstven stav da je digitalizacija učinkovit način očuvanja audiovizualne memorije i poticanja javnog interesa za filmske zbirke i arhive i, s druge strane, da odabir filmova za digitalizaciju treba biti vođen prema rigoroznim i sustavnim kriterijima, čime se izbjegavaju štetni učinci nasumičnih metoda. Na kraju, ponuđene su neke buduće istraživačke teme.

Originalnost/vrijednost. Konzultirana literatura sagledava teme koje se odnose na odabir filmova i digitalizaciju isključivo kroz prizmu arhivistike, odnosno knjižničnih i informacijskih znanosti. Ograničena je na navedena specifična područja znanja i usmjerena na profesionalce i stručnjake iz toga područja. Iz toga razloga moglo bi biti zanimljivo istražiti i druga gledišta i perspektive koje nadilaze čisto tehnički, teorijski ili metodološki pristup očuvanju i brige o filmu.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: odabir filma u arhivima, digitalizacija filma, filmoteka, filmski arhivi, filmsko arhiviranje