Inside the new Media History Digital Library

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Media History Digital Library & Wisconsin Center for Film & Theater Research
Today’s Workshop

1. Brief overview of MHDL and new pressbook scanning (Eric Hoyt)

2. Global movie magazines — recent additions via post-production (Kat Pan).

3. Global movie magazines — recent additions via new scanning collaborations (Lesley Stevenson)

4. Tour of the new MHDL and Lantern interface and database (Ben Pettis & Sam Hansen)

5. Your questions, comments, and ideas (Everyone — use Zoom chat and raise hand button)
The Media History Digital Library provides free online access to books and magazines related to the histories of film, broadcasting, and recorded sound. We are physically housed within the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, and our virtual collections — 3 million digitized pages — can be accessed at https://mediahist.org.
MHDL Growth Timeline

• 2009 — David Pierce founds MHDL as a collaborative digitization, conservation, and access initiative.

• 2011 — Pierce, Hoyt, and Wendy Hagenmaier launch first MHDL website, with roughly 100k pages of Film Daily, Photoplay, and Prelinger Library scans.

• 2013 — Public launch of Lantern, the MHDL’s search platform, featuring 800k pages of scanned material.

• 2014-2016 — Project Arclight initiative for developing data mining tools for MHDL’s collections. Partnership with Charles Acland and Concordia University, supported by IMLS, NEH, and SSHRC.

• 2017-2019 — MHDL officially transitions to the University of Wisconsin-Madison and becomes part of the WCFTR. Collection reaches 1.5 million pages.

• 2020-2022 — Work plan for the “Globalizing and Enhancing the Media History Digital Library” initiative, with goals of improving the collections, backend database, and frontend user interface. Sponsored by ACLS and UW-Madison.
Project Team: Globalizing and Enhancing the Media History Digital Library

- **Director and PI**: Eric Hoyt
- **Co-PI**: Kelley Conway
- **Database Developer**: Samuel Hansen
- **Interface Developer**: Ben Pettis
- **Communications**: Lesley Stevenson, Lauren Wilks, Pauline Lampert
- **Data Curation and Post-Production**: Kat Pan, Kallan Benjamin, JJ Bersch, John Bennett, Samantha Janes, Olivia Riley, Matt St. John.
Global Movie Magazine Networks
Edited collection by Kelley Conway & Eric Hoyt. Forthcoming in 2024.

- Explores the histories and connections across film journals published in countries including Argentina, France, Italy, India, Germany, Japan, China, Iran, Russia, Mexico, and South Korea.

- Over 20 chapters from leading film historians and digital humanists, thematically grouped around questions of hybridity, circuits, intermediaries, digital methods, and historiography.


- Helpful secondary source for interpreting Hollywood trade papers within the MHDL and Lantern.
- Free open access edition is available within the Lantern homepage.
Pressbooks

https://mediahist.org/collections/pressbooks/

800 currently available; 3,500 more in WCFTR collection & scanning queue.

Thank you to Matthew & Natalie Bernstein for their generous support.
Earthworm Tractors (Warner Bros., 1936)
Earthworm Tractors (Warner Bros., 1936)
Globalizing the MHDL collection. Project start date: January 1, 2020.

A global pandemic is not the ideal time to launch an ambitious worldwide scanning initiative.

- Yet, at the same time, it made clear how important online access initiatives are.
- Even if we could not actively scan materials, we could take magazines that had been scanned years earlier, secure permission to share the files, and put them through our post-production and indexing systems.
- Even if the image resolution is low, the facsimile of a historical magazine is better than nothing at all. Also, OCR packages keep improving.
Setāreh-ye Sinemā (Cinema Star), Iran, 1954-1977

Outstanding text searchability in Persian, according to Iranian film scholars who have started using them.
Chinese Movie Magazines

• We added short runs of six Chinese movie magazines to MHDL collection.

• Thank you to Emilie Yueh Yu Yeh & Darrell Davis at Lingnan University.

• Thanks also to Belinda Q. He and the Center for Chinese Studies, University of California, Berkeley & the Department of Film and Media Studies, University of Oklahoma, Ning Li and the School of Arts and Communication, Beijing Normal University, Chin Zippo and the Department of Directing, Beijing Film Academy.
Italian Movie Magazines:
Collaboration with CSC

• We added six Italian film periodicals to MHDL collection: Lo schermo; Film d’oggi; Cinema illustrazione; Bianco e Nero; Star; La critica cinematografica.

• Thank you to Daniela Treveri Gennari (Oxford Brookes University) for facilitating this collaboration.

• Thank you to Biblioteca Luigi Chiarini del Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia staff (Gabriele Antinolfi, Laura Pompei, Debora Demontis)
German Trade Paper: 
Der Kinematograph, 1907-1932. Now Online!

• The German film industry’s first trade paper. Chronicled cinema from multiple angles.

• Thank you to Michael Cowan and Mikrofilmarchiv der deutschsprachigen Presse for making the scans available.

• Dedicated to the memory of editor Alfred Rosenthal, who died in the Holocaust.
Next phase... building productive partnerships with archives for new scanning.

• Building collaborations on trust, respect, and humility.

• Scanning takes place in the manner that institutions and collectors find works best for their needs. The MHDL provides guidance and adapts to the specific circumstances during the post-production process.

• Sharing data and metadata enhancements with the institutions, as well as global users.

Thank you New York Public Library, Rielle Navitski, Laura Isabel Serna, and Nicolas Poppe
• Long-running French film industry trade paper. Became the official organ of the National Syndicate of Cinema Exhibitors in the early 1930s.

• Scanned in Paris from the collections of the Cinémathèque française.

• Thank you to the University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Interdisciplinary French Studies and the French Embassy of Washington, DC for their funding support.
Tour of the new website!