

Strategy for UK Screen Heritage

Survey of Moving Image Collections held in the English Regions

Guidelines for Assessment for Significant Collections

The purpose of the Screen Heritage Survey is to help to map where significant moving image collections are held across the English regions. Each Regional Screen Agency will be required to assess the significance of collections identified through the mapping process, so that they can make good informed decisions when planning how best to invest in future funding for the sector. The information that you give in your response to the Survey will greatly assist in this process.

We recognise that there is only limited space within the survey to respond, and if your Regional Screen Agency needs more information on your collections, they may need to contact you for more detailed discussions.

The Process

To a degree, assessing significance is a subjective process and it is not an easy thing to quantify. However in order to ensure some uniformity across the sector, we have developed a set of criteria which should be referenced when completing the narrative description required in the Survey. Assessing Significance involves three tasks:

- analysing the collection;
- understanding its history and context; and
- identifying its value for communities.

The Criteria

To help in this process, we have developed a set of four primary and four secondary criteria which will help to quantify the significance of the collections. Collections will not necessarily cover all the criteria, but please do use these criteria as guidelines when giving a description of your collection(s) in the first section of the Survey.

Primary Criteria:

1 Historic

A collection may be historically significant for its association with people, events, places and themes. Significant collections (or indeed an individual film) may range from those associated with famous people and important events, to films of daily life and activities. They include collections that are typical of particular events and activities, industries or ways of living.

2 Aesthetic

A collection may be aesthetically significant for its craftsmanship, style, or technical excellence.

3 Interpretive Potential / Research Potential

Collections may be significant for their capacity to interpret and demonstrate new insights into historical and cultural themes, and that can promote and enable these to be further developed and explored, through discussion, exhibition, or further study. A film or collection may also be significant for links to particular themes, histories, or ways of seeing the collection.

A collection may have research significance if it has potential for further study or research or exhibition – for example a collection where there is full background information, possible artefacts, script notes, filmography etc., or a collection that focuses in depth on a specific subject matter.

4 Social and cultural significance

Collections may have social or cultural significance if they are held in community esteem. Collections have social or cultural significance if they demonstrate social, cultural or spiritual expressions which relate to, or contribute to a community's identity and social cohesion. This is a particularly important criteria for RSA's when undertaking the Significance Assessment process.

Secondary Criteria:

1 Provenance

Archival collections take the provenance of a record as a basic organising principle. Provenance refers the chain of ownership and context of use of the collections. A collection may be significant because of its provenance — a documented history of its existence, ownership and use gives it a context in society at large or in the more personal world of a known individual.

2 Representativeness

A film or collection may be significant because it represents a particular genre or other aspect of film making, or it represents an excellent example of activity, way of life or historical theme.

3 Rarity

A film or collection may be significant as a rare, unusual or particularly fine example of its type, or the content of the film may be unique or rare, therefore increasing its' significance.

4 Condition, completeness or intactness and integrity

A collection may be significant because it is unusually complete, or in sound, original condition. Collections with these characteristics are said to have integrity. Changes and adaptations made in the working life of a film do not necessarily diminish significance, and in fact are also recognised as an integral part of the object and its history.