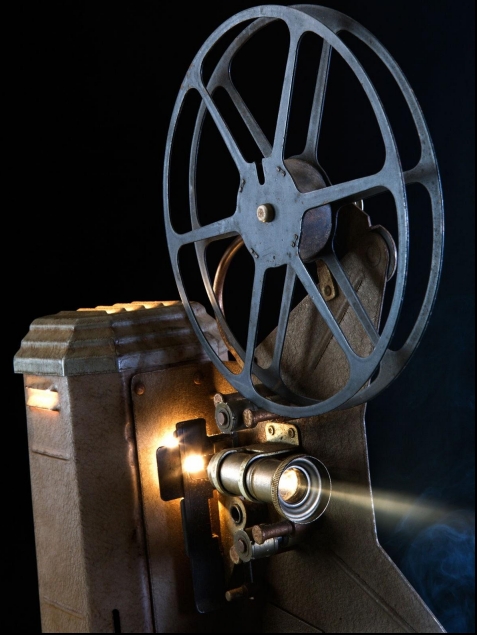
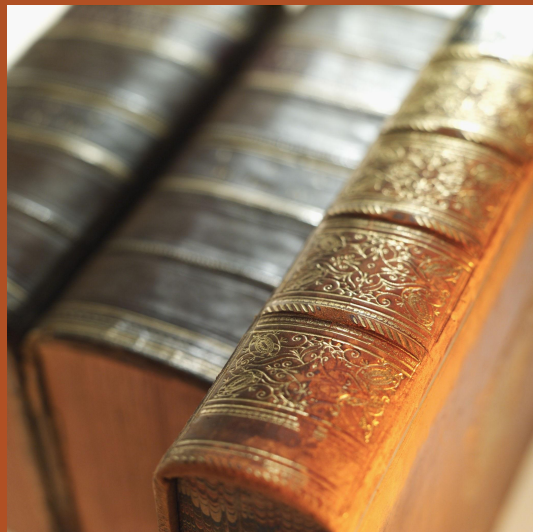


A Day in the Life of a Research Intern at the AFI Catalog



Michelle Berman

OVERVIEW OF THE AFI CATALOG



The AFI Catalog of Feature Films is recognized as the world's most authoritative database of American film, housing extensive information about films, filmmakers, and release details. It acts as a pivotal resource for both film scholars and enthusiasts alike, documenting the evolution of American cinema.

Research interns carry on the work of the NEH-funded Behind the Veil project, which documents short films from the early days of Hollywood (1910-1933), chronicling the groundbreaking work of female and BIPOC directors and screenwriters.

Research Intern Learning Outcomes



As a remote Research Intern, I am immersed in historical research and cataloging practices. My responsibilities include researching films, gathering production data, and contributing to the AFI Catalog under the guidance of the Catalog Manager.

- 01** **Apply established archival and historical research methods to the study and documentation of American film.**

- 02** **Demonstrate competency in cataloging standards and practices used in professional film research environments.**

- 03** **Navigate research tools to verify, assess, and record film information.**

- 04** **Produce research outputs that meet professional expectations for accuracy, organization, and documentation, and communicate findings clearly .**

DAILY WORKFLOW AND RESPONSIBILITIES

My day-to-day work varies and because it's remote, I usually do a few hours of work at a time in between other tasks. I currently alternate between researching films and cataloging them. It usually takes me one to two work sessions to research a film, and one to two sessions to catalog it.



RESEARCHING FILMS

I start by picking a film from an Excel spreadsheet that has not been signed out by another cataloger or intern. I search the AFI Catalog to make sure an entry does not already exist. Then I create a folder on my computer for the film, and a Word document to keep my virtual clippings.

After researching the Library of Congress copyright information, I use Lantern and Newspapers.com to search for the title of the film. I record information about the release date, length, cast, contemporary reviews, and any facts I can find about the production or premiere by creating screenshots which include the date, publication name, and page number. I filter search results based on release year (1913-1915 for a 1914 film), and usually conduct additional queries with the names of the cast members, director, screenwriter, and/or studio depending on what I found in the initial search. I copy the screenshots in chronological order into my Word doc and add any needed notes to explain what I found.

Resources

01 Library of Congress's Catalog of Copyright Entries for Motion Pictures (1912-1939)

I check this source, hosted on Project Gutenberg, for a copyright entry for the film, and copy it into my Word document if I find one. Not all films from this time period have one.

02 Library of Congress website

If I located an entry, I search the Library of Congress's website to find the actual motion picture copyright description, a document submitted by the copyright holder which usually contains a synopsis and cast list.

03 Lantern Media History Digital Library

This resource, hosted by the University of Wisconsin-Madison, contains thousands of scans of digitized books and magazines from the histories of film, broadcasting, and recorded sound.

04 Newspapers.com

One of the largest digital newspaper archives on the internet, which includes newspapers from the 1700s up to modern times, with content from the U.S. and other countries.

CATALOGING PROCESS



When I'm finished with research, I catalog the films based on my document. I enter the backend of the AFI Catalog and go through the data entry process step by step, entering the release date, film length, and any information I found about the premiere or production, including dates, locations, and sources. I also enter production credits, cast credits, synopsis, genre, and subject headings. Documentation provides guidelines for how this information should be formatted.

When I reach the history section, I open another Word document I have created. Based on my research, I write a history of the film in roughly chronological order, citing newspaper, magazine, and book sources as needed. I enter the sources with the page numbers in a separate section, referring to my research document. If I was able to find a copy of the film to watch, which is rare, I enter the link to that in another section. Then I submit my draft for the Catalog Manager to proofread.

WEEKLY *MEETING*

On Friday afternoons, all the interns participate in a video call with the Catalog Manager. She talks about the work she did that week, like writing articles for AFI's blog and working on grant proposals. Then, each of the interns talks about their week and what they accomplished, and raises any questions that have arisen. We also have a chat in Microsoft Teams where we can ask questions and share links to films or fun facts during the week.

