

IN SEARCH OF THE RE"MARC"ABLE

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Cine-GT 1803: Metadata for Moving Image Collections
September 28, 2014

To search for uniquely American film art, the best place to start was in archives based in California — the UCLA Film and Television Archive for mainstream feature films and the Pacific Film Archive for films more independent in nature.

In order to search for one of my favorite Hollywood-era films, *Design for Living*, it seemed like a logical move to choose the UCLA Film and Television Archive. I didn't want to stop at the film itself, but I also wanted to look into one of its actors, Miriam Hopkins, as well as conduct a broader research into pre-code films and whether this film fit into this genre. I also wanted to see whether any nitrate formats were extant in this collection and if *Design for Living* was among them.

The first site visited was the UCLA Film and Television Archive. On the home page of the site, the user has two options — to go directly to the catalog or to select the Research page. The Online Catalog page takes the user directly into search mode. Underneath the search functions, the site makes it easy by offering basic suggestions on how to word queries for the best results. By following the alternate path to the Research page, the user can click a “Search Collections” link that will lead to two PDFs, basic and advanced, that further instructs how to use the search functions effectively.

The search interface was a tabbed page with both simple and advanced searches. It was very easy to navigate the collection with this interface and there was plenty of help conveniently listed if there were any questions. After entering the film title in the basic search interface and selecting the Title Search radio button, the three results I received were exactly what I was looking for. Drilling down into the first result, a user-friendly page view appeared with all the pertinent information about the film including cast, crew, copyright, program notes and the search terms I had entered highlighted in yellow. At the bottom of the page was the listing of the holdings of all formats of this film that the archive houses and, in some instances, what condition

they were in. Scrolling back to the top of the page, there was a blue window on the right hand side of the screen that allowed the user to view the record in MARC (MACHine-Readable Cataloging). The MARC view did not have the holdings category that was seen in the simplified view and it referred to the genre as a feature, which it was, but neglected to mention that it was a comedy. Though the overall information was complete and gave me what I was looking for, it could have been more granular in terms of the way the fields were presented. The cast is grouped together in one field as well as the crew in another. For example, if the user wanted to research one of the actors, it would have been more helpful to have a separate field entry for each with birth and death dates and links to filmographies that are in the archives.

Which brought me to my next search. This site was a little less helpful when searching for Miriam Hopkins, the leading actress in *Design for Living*. Using the basic search function, only her name, her birth and death dates and an incomplete filmography came up. Oddly enough, *Design for Living* was not listed even though the archive houses this film. A more advanced search came up with a more complete listing but also added films that she did not appear in (e.g., D.W. Griffith's *Intolerance* appeared in the results and had two actors by the names of Miriam Cooper and Clyde Hopkins). As this is an archival site, I was hoping for some additional biographical ephemera such as correspondence, contracts, or at the very least links that would point me in the right direction. In this instance, the results did not match what I was looking for and left me combing through results that had nothing to do with my search topic.

The next category I wanted to research was pre-code films. The UCLA Film and Television Archive was promoting their collection of these films and I was curious to learn more about them, see which films they had and whether *Design for Living* was among them. This site had an easily accessible Motion Picture Collections page where I was able to link to the Pre-code Era Collection. This page offered a brief overview of the pre-code era along with a PDF file of some of the films in

their collection. I wanted to see if searching for a listing of pre-code films in the basic and advanced searches would turn up a matching list and for the most part, it didn't. I also discovered that *Design for Living* was not listed as a pre-code film. One of the items that did match up was a film called *The Story of Temple Drake*. I decided to focus on this result as Miriam Hopkins was in the cast and I was curious to see if there were any differences in how the data was presented. The data presented was fairly granular though the current copyright holder was missing as well as any preservation records. One of the interesting differences on this page was that members of the cast were singled out into individual MARC 700 fields with complete birth and death dates. Most interestingly, in the non-MARC view, each name was a link that led elsewhere. Instead of leading to pertinent information, however, these links led to lists of unrelated names and titles. For example, when the "Miriam Hopkins" link was selected, the search list ran the gamut from Dennis Hopper to the television series *The Hot L Baltimore*. So the initial metadata supported what I was looking for in terms of basic knowledge for *The Story of Temple Drake*, but the hyperlinks included in the record added no further granularity and may have added more confusion.

Finally, the last search on this site involved looking for which of these films may be on nitrate stock. In the basic search interface using the site's best vocabulary practices and then selecting the Holdings search radio button, I was able to ascertain that a 35mm nitrate studio print of *The Story of Temple Drake* existed in the archives along with a condition report and the date it was last inspected. As mentioned earlier, the holdings records metadata exists separately from the MARC metadata.

The next online archive visited was the Pacific Film Archive. This time, I wanted to research the filmography of the underground director George Kuchar. I was especially curious to see if two of the films, *The Saga of Magda* and *Fashion Vixen* were in the collection. Then I wanted

to look for Dan Carbone, one of Kuchar's regular actors, to see if his name came up anywhere in any of the records.

The first thing that the Pacific Film Archive had in common with UCLA was that both sites used the MARC standard of cataloging. As with the UCLA site, the Pacific Film Archive had a button located at the top of each record page allowing the viewer to select a MARC view. What they did not have in common was the ease of searching. The Pacific Film Archive gave the user two ways to search in two vastly different search engines. One link pointed the user to the in-house catalog while the other placed the user into the University of California Berkeley Oskicat system with the instruction that Pacific Film Archive needed to be selected from a dropdown menu in order to achieve an accurate search. Both options had advanced search engines, but neither gave the helpful advice that was found on the UCLA site. Neither of my title searches turned up anything in the archives, but a generalized search for George Kuchar not only turned up a fairly extensive list of films, but also biographies and related works. As I could not find the titles I was searching for, I looked at the record of one of his other films, *I, an Actress*, to compare the metadata to what I had seen on the UCLA site. The metadata was gratifyingly granular including personal production notes from the director as well as notes on the condition and accessibility of all prints of this film in the archive. Deciding to look at the same metadata for this film in the in-house catalog, I was surprised to see that there was no difference when MARC View and Normal View were selected. The fields almost suggested Dublin Core, but the way they were formatted was unlike anything I've seen so far. As with some of the records in UCLA, links in the Pacific Film Archive guided the user to related films in their collection. It would have been nice to see related links that might have led me to what I was looking for at another site.

My search for Dan Carbone yielded nothing from the archive collection.

In conclusion, it seems that the UCLA Film and Television Archives were easier to navigate than the Pacific Film Archive. Both sites were limited in their results when queried about genres and people and sometimes listed results that were not related to the initial query. When looking at archives, the user is looking specifically at the holdings the archives possess. The metadata, in the case of both archives mentioned above are at the item level and in MARC, making it impossible to link to related items or other catalogs that might further assist the user in his research. Both sites give the visitor a good overview of their collections, but if you are looking for more breadth and depth, you have to continue searching.

Bibliography

Pacific Film Archive. http://www.bampfa.berkeley.edu/pfalibrary/search_library (accessed September 28, 2014).

UCLA Film and Television Archive. <http://www.cinema.ucla.edu/> (accessed September 28, 2014).