

MCLS-995: A Wartime Collection

Sarah Hartzell, Kirk Mudle, William Plotnick, Ben Rubin

Introduction to Moving Image Archiving and Preservation

Prof. Howard Besser

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Americans have a very specific idea of what the Second World War was like: storming the beaches of Normandy, the bombing of major cities, the lack of any women on the front lines, etc. And while all of these aspects were present in the war to some capacity, they were not the only defining feature — there were lulls in between fighting, there were moments when soldiers could even relax, and there were (in a somewhat limited capacity) women present in the European theater. These moments are often not the ones that are written down or recorded, so when an example of one is found, the need to preserve it greatly increases. In the collections of the University of South Carolina, there exists one such film, or rather, a collection of films — MCLS-995, MCLS-996, MCLS-997, and MCLS-998 (for the sake of clarity, when referring to the collection as a whole, it will be referred to as “the MCLS-995 Collection”). The film, which is composed of clips of varying degrees of quality as well as subject matter, is an important document not only because of what it depicts, but also because of the scarcity of such films. According to Marsha Orgeron, soldiers (or at least, Marines) were not allowed to film, photograph, or even write down day-to-day events in a diary, for fear that it might become valuable information should it be captured by the enemy¹. How strictly this was enforced is unknown, but regardless, this policy greatly reduced the number of amateur films that could be made during the war. As such, films such as these that show life “behind the front lines,” as it were, or even just the more mundane aspects of a soldier’s life, are of vital importance both to film historians and military historians.

One example of this can be seen in MCLS-995, which at one point shows an award ceremony — two superior officers, a staff sergeant and a master sergeant, are shown handing out medals to what seems like a platoon of troops, most likely a part of the 15th Air Force (more

¹ Orgreon, “Filming the Marines”, 2008.

details below). While further research would probably be able to determine which platoon was receiving the medals, when the ceremony happened, and for what reason, the very fact that there was a camera there to record such an event is remarkable in and of itself.

There are also shots of what can best be described as “shore leave”: shots of the various cities and places that the soldiers visited during their down time. This is especially apparent in MCLS-998, which feature shots of various major cities in Italy, including Rome and Naples. Likewise, there are earlier shots of the soldiers just relaxing, not having to worry about the war just to the north of them; in MCLS-995, for example, there is an extended sequence of two soldiers just drinking soda, at one point even jokingly miming drinking a now empty bottle.

The film isn't composed just of soldiers taking time off, however; parts of the film are composed of actual combat. Section MCLS-997 has shots that are composed of aerial footage taken by fighter pilots shooting at targets on the ground (most likely either convoys or trains, given the little resistance seen). In fact, it is these shots that give us the only two specific dates (August 15th and 16th, 1944) that can be determined from the film. The equipment required to set up the camera makes it unlikely that this was also amateur footage, meaning that each of the segments was filmed at different times and locations, possibly even by different people.

The films were shot sometime during the summer of 1944, in various locations around Italy. Some of these locations are relatively easy to identify: in MCLS-998, for example, shots of Pompeii, Monte Casino, and the Vatican are all seen, indicating that MCLS-998 was filmed during the summer of 1944, after Rome had been captured by the allies. Others are more difficult to identify. In MCLS-995, for example, we see a series of planes taking off from an airfield. There are no landmarks that can easily be identified, and so the location of the base (as will be discussed later) had to be determined from other clues, namely the markings on the aircraft.

This document will serve as both an introduction and a guide to the MCLS-995 collection. It will outline, in detail, all of the parts that make up the MCLS-995 collection, as well as the historical details that can be found in those clips. It will then briefly detail why the films should be preserved, and what historical value they may have for both film historians and military historians. Finally, it will describe the various technical difficulties that have already afflicted the film, what issues it could face in the preservation process (both in terms of technical difficulties, as well as issues with archiving), and what steps need to be taken in order to ensure the film's survival for years to come.

Investigating the Content

Sarah Hartzell

One of our main goals with this film was to identify the basic “who, what, when, where” of what we see as a starting point to establish greater significance and context. We were given a very short description in the brief: “Several amateur films showing US Air Force bomber unit? Or US Army, in Italy? Possibly during WWII.” These assumptions were easily checked against the footage. Based on the uniforms of the soldiers and the aircraft shown, we easily established that it is, in fact, the U.S. Army Air Force stationed in Italy during WWII (fig. 1.1, 1.2). Thanks to a very clear shot of a calendar, we know the year is 1944 (fig. 2). Some further digging establishes an even more specific time and place.



Figure 1.1. A wall on the port with “Credere Obbedire Combattere” written. This was the slogan of the Italian fascist party.



Figure 1.2. A plane with the American “star and bar.”



Figure 2. A calendar for 1944.

The first segment of the film, MCLS-995, shows a number of airplanes in an airfield. The planes can be identified by their shape and their tail markings.² These planes have four propellers and triangular wings, easily identifying them as Boeing B-17 “Flying Fortress” bombers (fig. 3.1 and 3.2). B-17s were used by only two numbered air forces in Europe, the Eighth and the Twelfth (later combined with the Fifteenth). The Eighth Air Force was based in England, while the combined Twelfth/Fifteenth was based in and around Foggia, Italy during these years, so we can reasonably conclude that these planes are part of that unit.³

² Bender, “These Charts,” 2016.

³ Maurer, *Air Force Combat Units*, 1961.

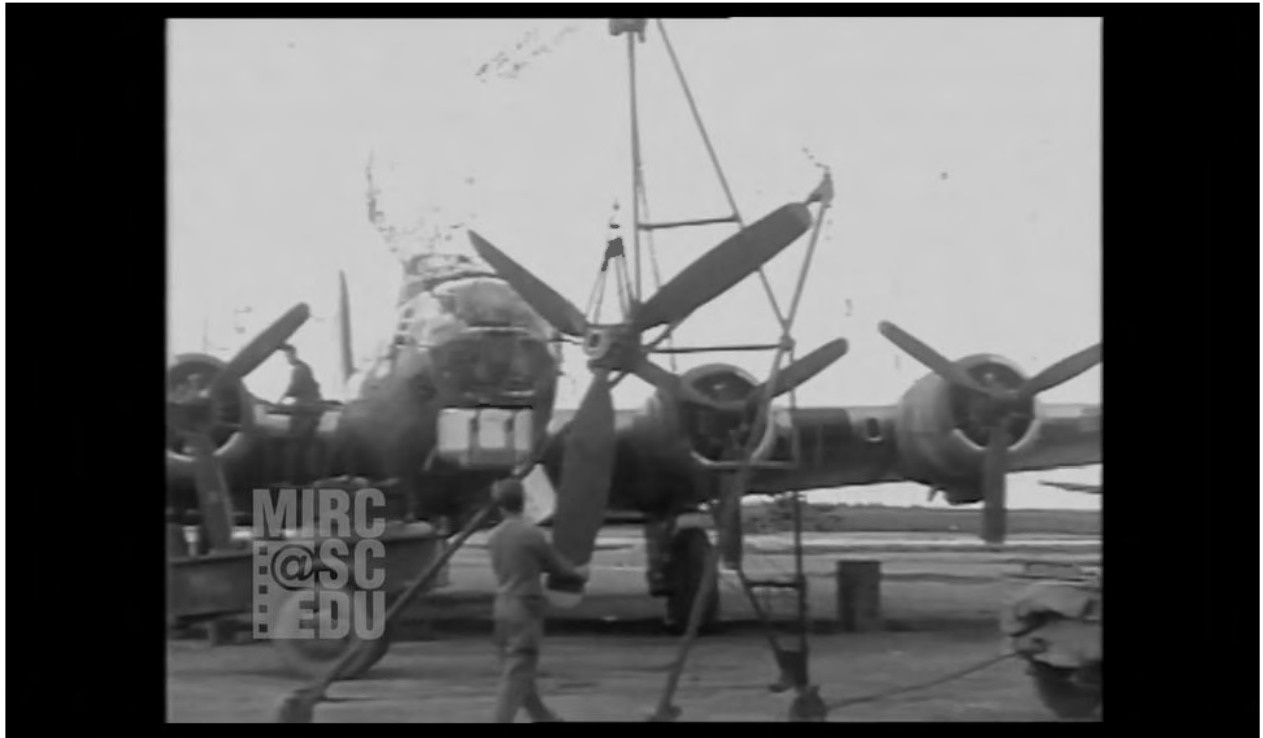


Figure 3.1. A B-17 airplane with four propellers.



Figure 3.2. The chrome finish and wide triangular shape of the B-17.

Further identification comes from the tail markings of the planes. Bombardment groups used different combinations of shapes and letters to identify themselves. In this clip, most prominent is the letter Y in a circle (fig. 4). The letter Y indicates the 5th Bombardment Wing, and the circle specifies the 2nd Bombardment Group. The 2nd BG was based specifically at Amendola Air Base in Foggia and aided in the invasions of Northern Italy and Southern France around this time.⁴



Figure 4. The “circle-Y” tail marking on a B-17.

This segment also contains footage of an award ceremony taking place at the airbase. The awards themselves are never visible, so much of the information required here is speculative. There are some details we can pinpoint. At the most basic, this is an American ceremony, given by the American color guard in the background (fig. 5.1). In some instances, we can narrow down the recipients of the awards. Using the search engine created by the *Military Times*’ Hall of

⁴ Underwood, “Second Bomb Group,” 2016.

Valor Project, we can get some results just by knowing that it is World War II, the Army Air Forces, and the rank of the individual. First we see several recipients with no patches on their left sleeve, indicating the rank of private.⁵ This yields 18 results. Since we know this is 1944, the action date must be during or before that year. We also know this unit is based in Europe, so we can eliminate the results from the Pacific Theater. This leaves five results.



Figure 5.1. The American color guard at attention during the awards ceremony.

The same process is applied to recipients with staff sergeant and master sergeant rankings (fig. 5.2). Several of the results show awards given for the same event, such as an thwarted explosion on the B-17 “Suzie Q” on August 2, 1943, and Distinguished Flying Crosses awarded to B-17 gunners for the invasion of Italy, so further research may be able to narrow the results even further. The strangest part of this segment is that two of the soldiers seem to have Distinguished Flying Crosses from the Royal Air Force pinned to their uniforms (fig. 5.3). These

⁵ “U.S. Military Rank Insignia.”

medals have a more pronounced cross shape, where the American version is more square, so it is a fairly distinct difference (fig. 5.4). Before the United States joined WWII, there were American pilots who joined the RAF through Canada and some did earn such medals for their service.⁶ However, what is unclear is if they would retain those medals once the U.S. joined the war and American pilots transferred back to the USAAF. It seems even less likely that they would be transferred back as privates rather than officers. This detail, while potentially very significant, also raises more questions than answers.



Figure 5.2. A staff sergeant and master sergeant, as indicated by patches on their sleeves, receiving awards.

⁶ Johnson, "Americans in the Royal Air Force," 2017.



Figure 5.3. Unidentified soldiers in American uniforms with possible RAF awards.



Figure 5.4. Left, the Royal Air Force's Distinguished Flying Cross. Right, the United States' Distinguished Flying Cross.

When it comes to further research, a mine we were unable to tap relates to the still photographer pictured in these films. He appears several times during the awards ceremony to capture the recipients and the group as a whole. One can imagine that these photos are in a military archive somewhere, however the Department of Defense and the National Archives do not provide access to their archives via the Internet. Should one choose to do further research on this event, these still photographs, should they still exist, would very likely give a clearer image of the awards being given and who they were given to.

The following segment, MCLS-996, changes locales to the headquarters of the 324th Service Command in Naples (fig. 7.1). The 324th was part of the 12th Air Force and supported air and ground forces from 1943 through 1945.⁷ In this footage we see the service headquarters, particularly the hospital. We can establish the existence of the hospital by the appearance of an ambulance marked with the red cross on the white field, as well as the word “ricovero” painted on the side of a building, ricovero meaning hospital (fig. 7.2). There is some text following “ricovero” on that building, but it is unfortunately undecipherable in this clip. Determining those additional words might give more context to the use of this hospital, like if it was intended for civilians or which army established it. We do know, however, that upon entering the city, officers of the British army noted the devastation that the city had seen and made a civilian hospital and access to medicine a priority.⁸

⁷ Wiltse and Bell, “Chapter 9,” 1965.

⁸ Taylor et al, “Chapter 9,” 1976.



Figure 7.1. 324th Service Center Headquarters in Naples.



Figure 7.2. Building with the word “ricovero.”

There is a shot from inside the hospital of a man receiving an injection (fig. 7.3). It is impossible to know what exactly the nature of this shot is, but we do know that there was a typhus outbreak around Naples in 1943 into early 1944. All soldiers received typhoid vaccines routinely, as well as tetanus and smallpox. The typhoid vaccine requires a booster every three years, so that could be what we are seeing here, and one would also imagine that just after a large outbreak a community hospital may provide vaccines to civilians, as well.⁹



Figure 7.3. Man receiving an injection in his left arm.

The latter segments of the film depict “r&r” for service men and women from different organizations (fig. 8). They seem to start in Naples, which would track with the movement of the units we have encountered so far; the 12th Air Force was headquartered in Foggia and the service command was headquartered in Naples.¹⁰ This is the only segment of the film in which we see women in the military and it is quite difficult to ascertain any information about them.

⁹ Kuhns and Learnard, “Chapter 22,” 1958.

¹⁰ Wiltse and Bell, “Chapter 9,” 326.

There were several roles overseas that American women served in during WWII, such as the Women Airforce Service Pilots, the Army Nurses' Corps, and the Women's Army Corps. Uniforms did not differ too significantly across the branches, so it is hard to tell where these particular women served, but statistically it is most likely that they are from the Women's Army Corps.¹¹



Figure 8. A rare glimpse of a woman in the armed forces.

Why preserve the films?

Ben Rubin

Before one can determine a preservation plan for the films, one must determine if the films deserve to be preserved, and if so, why. Outside of both its age and its rarity, the main reason why the films should be preserved comes in its value to historians, both film and military, as an artifact of the Second World War. This historical value comes in two forms: the first is that

¹¹ "American Women in World War II," 2010.

it provides valuable, and possibly one-of-a-kind, footage of military combat, in this case, the aerial footage we see in MCLS-997. Where these missions occurred is unknown, although, given the fact that both the dates the films were taken (August 15-16, 1944), the general location of where the rest of the films were shot (between the air bases in Foggia in the south and Rome in the North), and the names of at least one of the pilots of the missions are given in the film (Lafley), it would probably not be a challenge determining the greater historical context of the aerial footage.

The second reason why these films should be preserved comes from how it depicts the more low-key aspects of life during the war. As stated before, we see daily life slowly starting to return to normal in Rome and Naples, the soldiers on shore leave at destinations like Pompeii and the Vatican, and even an award ceremony where medals are being given out to the 15th Air Force. Moments like these help us remember that life during the war, especially behind the front lines, was not constant fighting, and films like the ones in this collection serve as testaments to that.

Beyond all that, however, the film is in dire need of preservation not only because of its age and importance, but also because of its deterioration. Even those who do not specialize in film preservation can tell that the film has experienced significant degradation in the 75+ years of its existence: the film is very grainy in certain places, some splices are very abrupt and noticeable even without looking at the film physically, and smudge marks and debris are present throughout the film. All this, combined with the high probability of the film suffering from vinegar syndrome (more details below) make it imperative that the film be both preserved for future generations, as well as restored to make it as close to what it originally looked like as possible.

Upon viewing the MCLS-995 Collection, it is obvious that the films suffer from severe physical and biological damage. A closer examination of the materiality of the collection provides valuable insights into how these films were recorded, edited, projected, and stored over time. Although many of the issues afflicting the film were likely caused by a combination of poor storage conditions and repeated or careless playback, there is also evidence to suggest that some damage may have been caused during the filming and editing processes. This section of our report will explore some of the more interesting and revealing aspects of the damage to the MCLS-995 Collection, while also offering some hypotheses about their significance.

Biological Damage: Mold

Much of the severe damage to the collection appears to be the result of an untreated mold infestation on the film itself. In less advanced stages, mold can show up on film as small dull spots or in channel or dendritic like patterns. If left untreated, mold can burrow into and eat away at the gelatin within the emulsion, causing permanent damage to the image. The first seconds of MCLS-995 show various stages of mold damage. As seen in figure 9.1, several frames show large and small spots, circular blotches, dendritic patterns, and even large clouds of missing emulsion. While the exact source of this kind of damage is difficult to determine without physically inspecting the film, the fact that these large white blotches are so close to other frames with obvious mold patterns suggests that the missing image is the result of years of untreated mold growth.

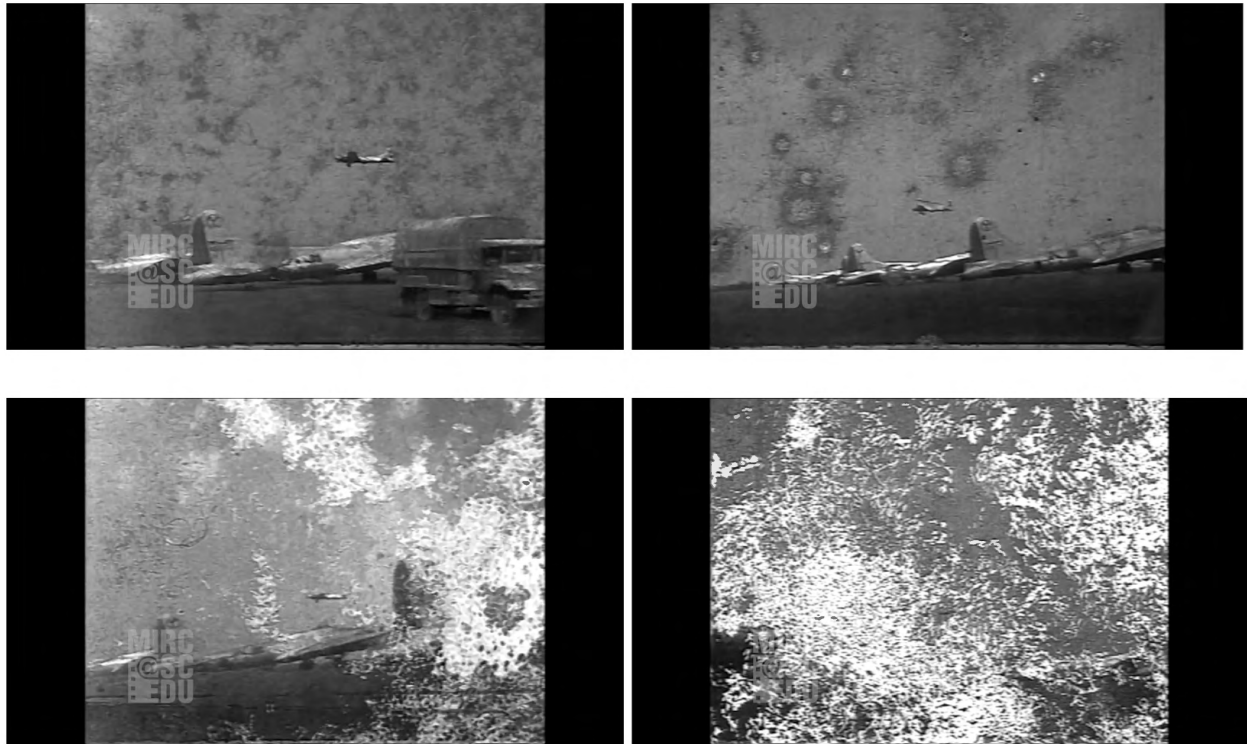


Figure 9.1. Different levels of mold damage in the first minutes of MCLS-995.

If mold damage is superficial, it might not be visible when a film is duplicated or projected.¹² The fact that so much of the image is missing in the aforementioned examples on the digitized version of MCLS-995 implies that the gelatin within the emulsion has been eaten or eroded, and that the image forming materials (and the images captured on them) are lost. This leaves us with the unfortunate conclusion that many sections of the film are irreversibly damaged.

The first six minutes of MCLS-996 (which begins at approximately the 14:32 minute mark) also show sustained mold deformation in the form of black speckles of varying sizes, dendritic patterns, and some markings that suggest insect or vermin damage (fig. 9.2). While mold is not as clearly seen over the entire length of MCLS-996, dendritic patterns and mold

¹² “Visual Decay Guide.”

spots do crop up at various points throughout the film. Likewise, in MCLS-997 and MCLS-998, mold damage is visible at various stages, suggesting that the infestation is not isolated to just the head or tail of the original film (fig. 9.3).



Figure 9.2. Mold, possible insect damage, and “dendritic” mold pattern on MCLS-996.

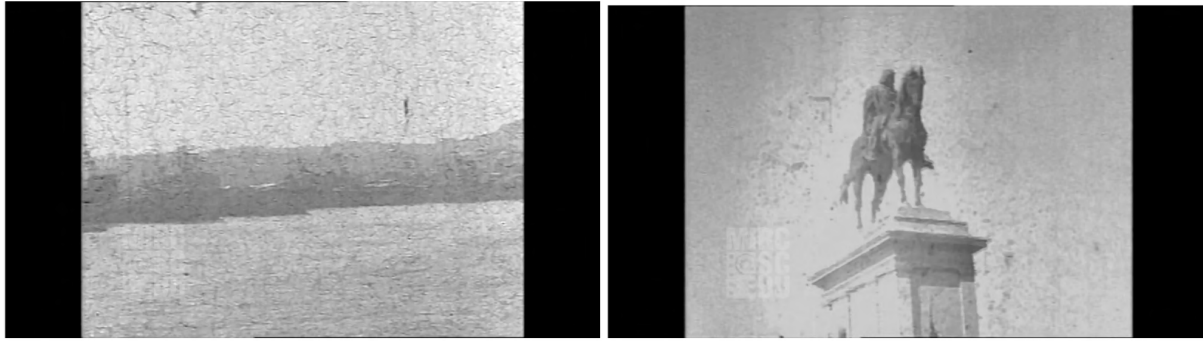


Figure 9.3. Mold damage on MCLS-997 and MCLS-998.

Physical Damage: Base and Emulsion Scratches

The entirety of the MSCL-995 Collection shows sustained base and emulsion scratches. These scratches create a “rain” effect on the film, which is present at various intensities throughout MCLS-995, 996, 997, and 998. What is particularly interesting about the scratches on these films is that certain sequences and shots have much more “rain” than those that directly precede and follow them. For example, in MCLS-996 at 20:39 a series of shots show two soldiers playfighting from multiple angles. While the rain effect is indeed present over this sequence, it is far less pronounced than in the subsequent scene that begins at 20:58 (fig. 10). From this point on, the rain effect remains at a relatively sustained level until the end of MCLS-996 and continues through the beginning of MCLS-997. The entire MCLS-995 Collection is rife with examples such as this, where the level of scratching shifts between shots without clear rhyme or reason.



Figure 10. Two subsequent shots from MCLS-996 showing different levels of “rain” scratches.

This raises several possibilities about the original film that the MCLS-995 Collection was digitized from. Rain scratching can occur at many different points during the film handling process. It is often evidence of repeated playback or projection in less than ideal conditions or on poorly maintained equipment. Furthermore, a “rain” effect is typically most prominent at the tail or head of a film reel.¹³ If MCLS 995, 996, 997, and 998 existed on separate reels for a significant period of time, we might expect heavy scratching (or general damage) at the beginning and end of each segment. The fact that there is no clear consistency in the rain patterns on the MCLS-995 Collection tells us that the films were likely compiled onto a single reel for many years prior to their digitation.

Emulsion Scratching and Possible Emulsion Shavings

While much of the damage to the MCLS-995 Collection is likely due to years of neglect, poor storage conditions, or careless playback, there is evidence to suggest that some damage may have occurred at the point of capture. Beginning at 01:19 in MCLS-995, small black markings begin to form at the top of the frame and slowly become more pronounced over subsequent shots. At the same time, a thin emulsion scratch also becomes visible on the far-right side of the

¹³ “Damage to films.”

frame. Similar markings appear at the top of the frame at various points throughout MCLS-995, accompanied by emulsion scratches. It is noteworthy that while the images themselves change, these markings stay in the same position and even grow over time (fig. 11.1). An even clearer view of this phenomenon is in MCLS-997 at approximately the 40-minute mark. After the section showing the bombing missions, the markings can be seen accumulating at the top of frame for the final seven minutes of the MCLS-997 episode (fig. 11.2).

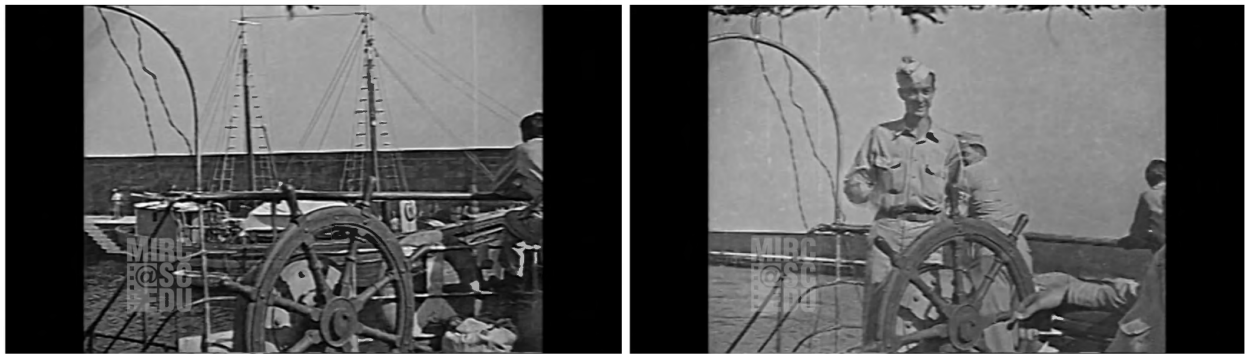


Figure 11.1 Possible emulsion shavings accumulating at the top of frame in MCLS-995.



Figure 11.2. Possible emulsion shavings in MCLS-997.

It is possible that these black markings are emulsion shavings that were scraped away during the filming process. If the camera gate is not thoroughly cleaned, or if the film was loaded incorrectly, part of the film's emulsion side can be scratched as it runs through the camera, causing emulsion scrapings to accumulate on the film itself.¹⁴ If this is the case, it implies that the individual who took this footage was either inexperienced (which we find unlikely), that they

¹⁴ Holstrom, "Film Preservation 101."

were working with unfamiliar equipment, or that other environmental factors prevented them from properly cleaning their equipment.

Evidence of Splice Damage

Finally, inconsistencies in the transitions between sequences and shots raise further questions about the way the collection was filmed, edited, and possibly repaired. There are many cases throughout the MCLS-995 Collection where the footage smoothly transitions between shots, where one image leads naturally into the next. However, there are a significant number of transitions that not only show the fragility of the film, but also suggest that parts of the film have been spliced. For example, in MCLS-996 at 24:24, a scene of a soldier playing with a dog violently cuts to a shot of two men pantomiming a game of fisticuffs outside of a medical building. If we look at the transition between these two shots frame-by-frame, the final image with the man and the dog has several large tears extending diagonally along the bottom right corner of the frame. Next, we can see the first frame of the following fisticuffs scene also has severe cracks extending across the top left corner, along with several other unseemly tears (fig. 12.1). A frame-by-frame analysis of a transition in MCLS-995 shows another example of this kind of damage. In this instance, which occurs at the 05:55 mark, small “bubbles” can be seen surrounding the damage on the top right side of the image, along with a series of vertical lines on the bottom of the frame (fig. 12.2).

The previous two examples may be cases of what is sometimes referred to as a “dry splice.” This occurs when shrinkage or other deterioration causes a cement splice to lose its plasticizer. This can result in either the area surrounding the splice becoming brittle, or the adhesive between the two film sections weakening. It is then possible for only part of the splice

to break while the rest still holds well enough to tear the film itself. This damage suggests that parts of the film were spliced together after being shot, either in an effort to repair the footage or to combine separate reels captured at different times and places. Based on how severely these parts of the film have degraded, it is reasonable to conclude that the episodes that make up the MCLS-995 Collection were spliced together sometime close to the time they were shot, and that the films have existed as a compilation for many decades. At the very least, we can assume that all four of its episodes were housed in the same unsafe and unseemly conditions before coming into the possession of the University of South Carolina.



Figure 12.1. “Dry splice” example at the 24:24 mark during MCLS-996.



Figure 12.2. “Dry splice” example at the 5:55 mark during MCLS-995.

Preservation Plan for the MCLS-995 Collection

William Plotnick

In previous sections of this paper, numerous aspects about the MCLS-995 Collection have been highlighted, such as its historical value, what actually can be identified in the films, and areas throughout the films that are most damaged. It is now important to lay out a preservation plan for this collection to ensure that the films will be accessible for future generations who are interested in learning about the history of World War II. In this final essay section, I will present a preservation plan for the MCLS-995 Collection that includes the

hypothetical circumstances under which the films would be presented to an archivist for a new preservation project, how that archivist could go about getting the films newly scanned, the proper storage conditions that the films should be held under, and the task of creating new metadata for the MCLS-995 Collection.

The MCLS-995 collection is a collection of rare World War II films owned by the University of South Carolina as part of their Moving Image Research Collections (MIRC). One of the major holdings of MIRC at the University of South Carolina is their “Military Films Collection,” composed of the Bruce Gambell collection, the Jack Leo Carlson collection, the Randy Cady collection, and the United States Marine Corps film repository.¹⁵ While the total amount of footage from these collections surely pales in size comparison to that of the National Archives of Washington D.C, the Military Films Collection of MIRC still comes together to compose a large amount of materials that reflect the history of war in the United States of America in a unique light, as one can tell when going through their catalogue.¹⁶

A likely circumstance under which the MCLS-995 collection would be suggested for a new preservation plan would be one in which MIRC or an outside institution becomes newly interested in aspects of World War II outside of active warfare. As Ben Rubin highlights in the opening portion of this text, there were other defining features of the Second World War besides just warfare. A grant project proposed by MIRC would be one that attempts to freshly highlight these moments for audiences, and the MCLS-995 collection would be perfect to do such a thing. A major part of this grant would be to newly scan the film with current digitization and restoration technologies. Another possible scenario is one in which MIRC decides to adopt a new metadata cataloguing system or digital asset management software to manage their university

¹⁵ “Tools & Resources.”

¹⁶ “United States Marine Corps Film Repository.”

archive. If they were to do such a thing, they might want to go through their previous collections (of which the MCLS-995 plays an important part), as a means of ensuring that there are sufficient metadata for the films to satisfy the archival search queries of their community. I will now deal with both of these aspects: how an archivist should best go about newly scanning the MCLS-995 collection and what kind of new metadata would be needed within a modern digital asset management system.

Before scanning the MCLS-995 collection, an archivist must go through each film print and fix the numerous problematic areas identified by Kirk Mudle in the previous section of this essay. For example, Kirk highlights that many of the splices in the film were in a problematic state when the film was initially digitized. Before any new digitization is done, a trained film archivist must go through each film print to repair torn sprockets and any splices that are not holding well. Once these problematic elements are fixed, the MCLS-995 collection will be ready for scanning.

Watching the digital copy of the MCLS-995 collection, it can be estimated from the resolution of the copy and the visible damage of the film retained in its digital scan that the MCLS-995 collection was originally digitized during the early DVD-era (between 1997-2003) at a resolution at or below 720 pixels, and then upscaled to 1080 pixels. It is not the graininess of the image that allows us to determine this, but rather its clear low resolution, with numerous visible pixels that can be seen when hitting pause at any moment throughout. Given the content of the MCLS-995 collection, it is safe to say that few duplications of the film were created. It is even possible that the original negative was the source for the scan. Regardless, newly digitizing a work such as this, with clear historical value, is incredibly important as there is no film preservation without creating new forms of access. Unfortunately, our current audio-visual

landscape is one in which films that are not accessible in 2K or 4K are often ignored by distributors and the general public. As such, how would we proceed with digitizing these films anew?

My suggested course of action would be to outsource the digitization from a company or institution that has a wet-transfer film gate in their facilities. I suggest this course of action because many wet-gate scanners accept 16mm film (which is the likely format our collection was shot on) and scan in 4K resolution. Also, one of the major problems with the current digital copy of the MCLS-995 collection is the numerous scratches it has in each frame. Because wet-gate scans display less visible scratches, this would be an important step in the process of restoring the work.

Another important element to consider is the mold damage identified by Kirk in his analyses of the film print. While a wet-gate scan might remove certain scratches, it certainly won't be able to handle the major areas of damage caused by this mold. I would therefore recommend that an institution like MIRC download a digital film repair software such as DustBuster+ by DIAMANT, which can "manually erase vertical lines, stains, punch holes, and other unwanted artifacts in single frames."¹⁷ While the user of this software won't be able to remove the mold damage from the film itself, it will allow them to create digital copies of the films which will appear as if they were never damaged in the first place. While presenting good looking digital copies is important, it is equally vital that only those areas of damage which significantly inhibit the viewer from appreciating what is inside each frame should be removed, as editing out all notable signs of the film's previous life would rid the impression that it was shot on film in the first place. At the end of this process, the MCLS-995 collection would be presentable in an improved digital scan for new audiences to appreciate.

¹⁷ "DIAMANT-Film Restoration Overview."

After the new digital restoration is complete, the film print should be returned back to the original institution and placed back within the archive. At this point, I would recommend putting the MCLS-995 collection into frozen storage, as the prints will remain preserved for the longest period this way. This is confirmed by Archivesfilmworks.com, who claim that “the lifespan of films that exhibit advanced signs of Vinegar Syndrome or color fading can be greatly increased by storing them in frozen conditions. Frozen storage does not ‘cure’ deterioration, but arrests it.”¹⁸ As the film print will be safe in frozen storage, the newly digitized copy will be the primary means of access to its contents from there on out.

Metadata

In what will possibly be the most time-intensive step of this preservation process, new descriptive metadata needs to be created for the MCLS-995 collection so it can be properly searched for within the MIRC database. The importance of this step cannot be overstated, with the OCLC/RLG Working Group on Preservation Metadata even claiming, “Perhaps more than any other media, digital information requires detailed metadata to ensure its preservation and accessibility for future generations.”¹⁹ Kerry Addica provides a simple definition of metadata that allows us to orient how we should approach the MCLS-995 collection. She states, “Metadata is the structured knowledge that we have about things we collect and, in order to make a collection usable, we need to record what we know about the things in the collection and make that knowledge available to others.” She also adds, “Descriptive metadata record the attributes of a resource; they provide both intellectual access to content and access points by which users can discover digital materials, and can include elements such as title and author.”²⁰ It is at this point

¹⁸ “Storage of 16mm Film.”

¹⁹ White, “Preservation Metadata.”

²⁰ Addica, “Descriptive Metadata,” 141-148.

that we need to ask: what in fact do we truly know about our collection of films, and can what we know allow us to build meta-data for them?

Table 1 provides the answer to that question. Even in instances where the main title or author is not apparent, there are ways we can build metadata for a film or a collection of films that allows users to target their content in their searches. The first observation that I would like to make about the below spreadsheet is that it is only a brief overview of the type of metadata that can be gleaned from our MCLS-995 collection. As Sarah Hartzell's section of this essay indicated, metadata researchers can go incredibly in-depth when building up information about an archival item. The important thing is to be aware of an institution's needs and goals with their metadata when compiling it. In the case of the above spreadsheet, I took a less rigid approach, and provided what I felt were important facts about our collection that might turn up in common searches. These include whether the film is in color or black & white, what year it was shot, its location, and its run length. However, I also attempted to go beyond basic facts by presenting key words that could identify the films in searches, still images of the films, and 3-4 sentence-long descriptions. Lastly, I presented an alternative name for the numerical titles, in the event that the archive was no longer satisfied with its number system.





MCLS-995 collection							
	995	996	997	998			
Collection	Military	Military	Military	Military			
Time:	14:11	17:03	16:01	18:46			
Sound:	Silent	Silent	Silent	Silent			
Stock:	Black & White	Black & White	Black & White	Black & White			
Gauge:	16mm	16mm	16mm	16mm			
Year:	1944	1944	1944	1944			
Place:	Northern Italy & Southern France	Northern Italy & Southern France	Northern Italy & Southern France	Northern Italy & Southern France			
Keywords:	B-17, Award Ceremony, Drinking, Off	Naples, Hospital, Women Soldiers, Fog	Aerial Assault, Fighter Plane, 1st persc	Pompei, Ruins of Italy, Leisure Time, Rome, The Vatican, Bombs, Dropping Bombs,			
Description:	Soldiers land in Italy, enjoy some leis	Soldiers patrol and roam throughout Ital	Soldiers carry at an assault on enemy i	Soldiers tour Italy's tourist attractions			
Film Stills:							
Alternative Title:	Landing in Italy	Preparing for Battle	Air Assault	Touring Italy			

Table 1. Metadata for MCLS-995 collection.

In the final section of this essay, I provided a theoretical preservation approach to the exciting MCLS-995 Collection of World War II films. This approach reflected a course of action that might occur when a preservation project is well funded. I've found that theorizing preservation practices under specific scenarios is an important archival exercise, as archivists need to be prepared to handle a diverse array of scenarios and items.

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