White Paper Report

Grant Number: HD-51642-13
Title of Project: Representing Early Black Film Artifacts as Material Evidence in Digital Contexts
Project Director: Brian Graney
Grantee Institution: Indiana University, Bloomington
Date Submitted: 07/31/2014
BACKGROUND

The study of “race movies,” the early motion pictures produced for Black audiences in the first decades of the 20th century, presents an ideal humanities context for framing important questions bearing on the digital representation of film artifacts and ephemera as material evidence. In a 2011 article, Jacqueline Stewart proposed a challenging new avenue for the study of early Black film—an area marked by its scarcity of extant documentation—by identifying unmined evidentiary value in what “we can learn from the singularity of each print...and what any existing print might teach us about the circulation, exhibition, and content of movies in this under-documented film culture. Indeed, when we think of each print as a unique artifact, we are encouraged to reconsider what we think of as a film’s ‘content.’”

In “Representing Early Black Film Artifacts as Material Evidence in Digital Contexts,” a Digital Humanities Start-Up Level I grant project supported through the National Endowment for the Humanities Office of Digital Humanities, the Black Film Center/Archive (BFC/A) at Indiana University proposed to conduct a two-day conference and workshop in November 2013 exploring the new methodologies and humanities questions emerging through recent scholarship in early Black film studies; and establishing the technological groundwork necessary for enacting these modes of inquiry through experimental approaches to integrating film among other forms of documentation in dynamic structures for discovery, presentation, and analysis. The BFC/A also proposed to videotape and transcribe the full conference and workshop proceedings and to make them publicly accessible through an Omeka-based website. All proposed activities were completed successfully within the grant period of May 1, 2013, through April 30, 2014.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Planning

Once the dates of November 15 and 16 were confirmed with all conference participants, the Indiana University Cinema and the BFC/A classroom were reserved as the venues for the conference and workshop. Planning for the event proceeded under the conference title, Regeneration in Digital Contexts: Early Black Film. In further support of the event, the Indiana University Cinema programmed two early Black silent film restorations from the Library of Congress to coincide with the conference and workshop: Richard E. Norman’s The Flying Ace (1926) and Oscar Micheaux’s Within Our Gates (1919).

In development over June and July, two project websites were launched in mid-August: a public website for distributing information about the

conference events, and a member-only wiki for use by project staff and conference participants. The wiki hosted informational resources regarding the project and offered space for conference participants to outline and discuss their presentations.

Promotion

Project director Brian Graney announced the conference in a presentation at the July 2013 Summer Film Symposium at Northeast Historic Film. In September, scholar and project advisor Jacqueline Stewart presented her paper, “Early Black Film Artifacts as Material Evidence: Digital Regeneration,” at the 2013 Orphans Midwest Symposium in Bloomington, Indiana, discussing the evolution and goals of the project and promoting the November conference. Graney discussed the project again at more length in November 2013 as a panelist on “Digital Humanities: New Opportunities for Funding, Research, and Access,” a session at the annual meeting of the Association of Moving Image Archivists in Richmond, Virginia.

In October, BFC/A and IU Communications prepared a press announcement regarding the project and upcoming events. This was distributed through professional and academic mailing lists in late October and to press outlets nationally in early November. A version of this announcement was also published in the Fall 2013 issue of BFC/A’s international film journal, Black Camera.  

Conference and Workshop

On November 15, 2013, participants and attendees gathered at the Indiana University Cinema for the full-day conference. The event was open to the public and free of charge. Following opening remarks by project director Graney and a welcome from Associate Dean for Arts and Humanities John Lucaites, Shola Lynch (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library) delivered a keynote address chronicling her research history with visual evidence of Black America and her goals for developing reference resources mining the moving image and sound collections of the Schomburg Center.

Greg Waller (Indiana University) moderated the first of the conference’s three panels, “The State of Research and Platforms for Access,” which featured presentations from Cara Caddoo (Indiana University), Matthew Bernstein (Emory University), and Dana White (Emory University). Caddoo shared her recent work to map early Black cinema circuits of exhibition and lines of Black migration using Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Bernstein and White continued the discussion of digital mapping through their analysis of film censorship records, tracing the exhibitions of controversial race films throughout the South, with a particular focus on the city of Atlanta, Georgia.

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In “The Carrier as Content,” Rachael Stoeltje (Indiana University) moderated a panel including Jacqueline Stewart (University of Chicago), Mike Mashon (Library of Congress), Leah Kerr (Academy Museum of Motion Pictures), and Jan-Christopher Horak (UCLA Film and Television Archive). Stewart discussed the impact of various standard and non-standard film formats on early Black filmmaking and exhibition. Mashon stressed the evidentiary value of the physical film artifact, its importance to research and identification, and the practical limitations of providing access to original film elements. Kerr presented the resources now in development through the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures for supporting collections of Black film ephemera. Horak established a link between early race films and more recent Black independent films of the L.A. Rebellion which suffer similar obstacles to endurance and visibility.

Barbara Klinger (Indiana University) moderated the final panel, “The Case of the Race Movie Circuit,” featuring presentations from Allyson Nadia Field (UCLA), Terri Francis (University of Pennsylvania), Barbara Tepa Lupack, and Charlene Regester (University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill). Field addressed the study of lost films through related artifacts and records, surveying the utility and limitations of various digital resources she has employed in her research. Francis provided insight into her research process by reviewing her investigations into Josephine Baker’s early career and the re-education films of the Jamaican Film Unit. Lupack presented the research challenges behind her most recent publication on Richard E. Norman, advocating for better referral networks between institutions and crowd-sourcing to find lost or forgotten materials. Regester concluded the panel with a discussion of the information to be gleaned from government documents, including death certificates and FBI files, and the laborious process of obtaining access to these materials.

The closing roundtable was moderated by BFC/A director Michael T. Martin with Rhea Combs (National Museum of African American History & Culture), Shola Lynch, Cara Caddoo, Jacqueline Stewart, Leah Kerr, Allyson Nadia Field, and Jan-Christopher Horak.

On November 16, 2013, the conference speakers and organizers reconvened at the Black Film Center/Archive for an intensive workshop program. In his introduction, Graney summarized the conversations of the first day as having moved from materiality toward a greater emphasis on issues of loss, invisibility, inaccessibility, and representation. He raised new questions about materiality and loss, and delineated literal and forensic materiality of archival sources as groundwork for the discussions to follow.

The workshop featured five presentations over the course of the day. Reto Kromer (Audio-Visual Preservation by Reto ch LLC) offered a technical report from the field of audio-visual digitization, reviewing various aspects of capturing and representing analog media in digital form and best practices for scanning older film formats. Jonathan Andrew Uhrich (Indiana University) surveyed digital tools in use for formal and quantitative analysis of film, including Cinemetrics, and projects such as Digital Formalism, which encountered the limitations of such tools when applied to older films. Will Cowan (Indiana University) introduced participants to the NEH-funded VideoStream 2 plugin for Omeka, demonstrating its utility in segmenting and annotating films for analysis and presentation. Doug Reside (New York Public Library) discussed and demonstrated various tools developed and in use to expose Performing Arts collections at NYPL, highlighting OpenBR facial recognition and a Popcorn.js-enriched video interface. John A. Walsh (Indiana University) demonstrated the use of Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) encoding for paratextual documents related to early films, and the supplementary tools which exploit this encoding to offer greater discovery and innovative use.
In the workshop’s closing session, participants discussed a number of potential future collaborative projects building on the relationships established at the Regeneration conference.

Dissemination and Sustainability

Within 6 months of the 2013 events, all videotaped conference and workshop proceedings were transcribed and made publicly available online at a dedicated website hosted by BFC/A. BFC/A graduate assistant Ardea Smith worked with Michael Tedeschi of Interactive Mechanics and Will Cowan to build the site using the open-source Omeka platform and the VideoStream 2 plugin. The custom Omeka theme designed by Tedeschi allows for faceted browsing and full-text searching of presentation and discussion transcripts linked to corresponding streaming video files. The website is available at http://www.indiana.edu/~regener8/regeneration/.

A set of PDF/A-format transcripts was uploaded for long-term retention to the Indiana University Scholarly Data Archive (SDA) repository and indexed in IUScholarWorks, which provides a user-friendly interface for the organization, context, and discoverability of data stored in SDA. This combination of IUScholarWorks and SDA provides mirroring, redundancy, media migration, access control, file integrity validation, embargoes, and other security-based services that ensure the data are appropriately archived. The PDF/A transcript files are accessible at https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/handle/2022/17479.

The tape-based master recordings of the conference and workshop proceedings are stored on-site in the BFC/A’s environmentally-controlled archival vault. The derivative H.264/MPEG-4 video files produced from the tapes were ingested for long-term retention in the Indiana University Libraries Fedora digital repository and are accessible through Avalon Media Systems, an open source system for digital audio and video content created by Indiana University in collaboration with Northwestern University. The video files in Avalon are linked to the corresponding PDF/A files in IUScholarWorks. BFC/A’s Avalon content is accessible at http://avalon-pilot.dlib.indiana.edu/.

AUDIENCES

The principal events of the project were the conference on Friday, November 15, 2013, and the workshop on Saturday, November 16, 2013. Sixty-eight (68) people were in attendance at the Friday conference, which was open to the public. Twenty-two (22) people participated in the invitational workshop on Saturday. The public audience for the conference included undergraduate and graduate students, university faculty and staff, Bloomington-area residents, and visiting attendees from Indianapolis and Chicago.

Both the conference and the workshop were attended by the participants enlisted for the project, which included an equal number of male and female film historians, archivists, and curators with expertise in African American studies and film history. Scholars from the University of Chicago, UCLA, Emory University, University of Pennsylvania, and the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill joined an interdisciplinary group of Indiana University faculty. Archivists and museum curators in attendance
represented institutions including the Black Film Center/Archive, the Library of Congress Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division, New York Public Library’s Performing Arts Division and Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, and the UCLA Film & Television Archive.

While not formally part of the grant project, the two silent film screenings programmed by IU Cinema in tandem with the conference provided an opportunity to raise awareness of the NEH project among a wider public at the university. Combined attendance at the two screenings was 221.

EVALUATION

Following the conference and workshop, UCLA Film & Television Archive director Jan-Christopher Horak published a review of the event on his blog, Archival Spaces: Memory, Images, History. Horak summarized the intellectual threads of the conference presentations and emphasized the workshop’s success in promoting active collaboration between humanities scholars and digital technology specialists. “The speakers,” he wrote of the workshop, “demonstrated a host of technical and conceptual solutions, which were surprisingly free of techno-geek formulations, allowing people like me to finally understand how certain aspects of digitality work. I was particularly interested in the new digital tools, e.g. Popcorn Maker, Cinemetrics, Digital Formalism, Omeka, Simile and Neatline, which allow the scholar to segment, dissect, analyze, and present film and ephemera documents.”

In a letter to Indiana University president Michael A. McRobbie, participant Barbara Tepa Lupack offered her congratulations on the success of the event: “It was, most of the participants agreed, one of the best (and best-run) conferences we have attended. The two-day event beautifully balanced keynotes, presentations, and discussions…every aspect of the conference was meticulously planned and executed. Like the other conference participants, I found the sessions stimulating and thought-provoking; and I came away with many ideas for new projects and collaborations. I am convinced, moreover, that the conference will continue to reap rewards in the coming weeks and months, as the material introduced and discussed is applied to research work and classroom instruction.”

Other participants expressed their appreciation to the organizers of the event. Matthew H. Bernstein (Emory University) wrote, “The Regeneration conference was a great success. I learned so much and was honored and felt privileged to be in the room with so many smart people doing such fascinating work.” Jacqueline Stewart (University of Chicago), whose prior research motivated the development of the project, wrote, “I’m truly honored by your interest in pursuing issues I raised in my article, your consistent references to that piece. I’m also so impressed by the way in which you staged so many fantastic conversations throughout. It was an incredibly productive, illuminating and fun experience that I will never forget.”

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5 Matthew Bernstein, email to Brian Graney, November 19, 2013.
6 Jacqueline Stewart, email to Brian Graney, November 18, 2013.
In the assessment of the project team at BFC/A, we were gratified to see the commitment on the part of all participants to engaging with the themes and questions presented through the project, and a genuine openness in sharing, discussing, and critically assessing their work and methodologies. The interdisciplinary, collaborative nature of the event was fully realized, as seen in the direct responsiveness of the workshop presenters to the conversations of the previous day, and in the active engagement of the conference scholars in the technological discussions. Participants pledged to sustain the relationships established through this project by offering a number of productive directions for continuing collaborative research.

The principal weakness of the project was that the wiki installation configured for conference and workshop planning did not serve adequately for the full range of activities it was intended to support. While the wiki was effective for hosting and sharing informational resources in advance of the conference, it proved less useful for coordinating discussions between the participants around the content of the various panels and presentations. Following the conference, the wiki was abandoned by the participants, with continuing discussions conducted instead by email.

CONTINUATION OF THE PROJECT & LONG-TERM IMPACT

The Regeneration workshop immediately stimulated talk among the participants of continuing their new collaborative partnerships to advance the study of early Black cinema through digitally-based projects and resources. Across the variety of projects proposed, the participants conveyed an overarching strategy of compensating for the scarcity of extant materials by enhancing access to those that survive, particularly through the encoding of text and tabular data to support discovery and linking of related materials within and across collections.

Throughout the events, two collections were frequently cited as being the most significant archival resources for the study of race film production and distribution: the George P. Johnson Negro Film Collection at UCLA Library Special Collections, and the Richard E. Norman Collection at the BFC/A and Lilly Library. In July 2014, with support from participants Matthew Bernstein, Barbara Tepa Lupack, and Jacqueline Stewart, the BFC/A submitted a proposal to the NEH Division of Preservation and Access to reintegrate, reprocess, digitize, and make publicly available the unique documentary contents of the Richard E. Norman Collection. The proposal would make a substantial contribution to the goals of the current project by creating a sizeable body of digital raw material as a foundation for developing efforts to further enhance access through text and data encoding, mapping, visualizations, and networked collections of related materials. In support of this long-term effort, Mike Mashon offered his dedication to supporting the online Norman project by contributing digital versions of the extant Norman films held at the Library of Congress; and Allyson Nadia Field (UCLA) offered to act as liaison with the UCLA Library Special Collections regarding the Johnson resources.

Another project raised during the workshop was proposed as a potential pilot project building on the conference themes and on research that Brian Graney and Jacqueline Stewart conducted at the George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film in preparation for the conference. Closely examining the one extant 35mm nitrate film print of Oscar Micheaux’s Body and Soul, a film with a complex history of exhibition and censorship, confirmed the existence of important discrepancies between the original print and the restored version, demonstrating the limitations of the more readily available DVD
viewing copy as a source for certain lines of research. The pilot as conceived would develop a critical research edition of *Body and Soul*, featuring annotations and related documents organized around a high-resolution static image of the full film artifact, made available for close scrutiny rather than time-based viewing. The critical research edition would serve a function and audience different from that currently met by the existing restored version and commercial DVD release.

**GRANT PRODUCTS**

All proceedings of the November 2013 conference and workshop were videotaped, transcribed, and made publicly available online at a dedicated website hosted by BFC/A. The website is available at http://www.indiana.edu/~regener8/regeneration/.

Transcriptions of the conference and workshop proceedings are also available in PDF/A format through the IUScholarWorks repository at https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/handle/2022/17479. Video of the proceedings is also shared through Indiana University’s Avalon Media System at http://avalon-pilot.dlib.indiana.edu.
APPENDIX I

List of Conference and Workshop Presenters

Matthew Bernstein (Emory University)  
Professor and Chair, Department of Film and Media Studies

Cara Caddoo (Indiana University) Assistant Professor, Department of American Studies

Rhea L. Combs* (Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture)  
Curator of Photography and Film

Allyson Nadia Field (University of California, Los Angeles)  
Assistant Professor, Department of Film, Television, and Digital Media

Terri Francis (University of Pennsylvania)  
Visiting Associate Professor, Department of Cinema Studies

Brian Graney (Indiana University)  
Archivist and Head of Public and Technology Services, Black Film Center/Archive

Jan-Christopher Horak (University of California, Los Angeles)  
Director of UCLA Film & Television Archive; Professor, Critical Studies

Leah Kerr (Academy Museum of Motion Pictures)  
Museum Collections Coordinator

Barbara Klinger (Indiana University)  
Professor of Film and Media Studies, Department of Communication and Culture

Barbara Tepa Lupack, Independent Scholar

Shola Lynch (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library)  
Curator, Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division

Michael T. Martin (Indiana University)  
Director, Black Film Center/Archive; Professor, Communication and Culture, American Studies

Mike Mashon* (Library of Congress)  
Head, Moving Image Section, Motion Picture, Broadcasting & Recorded Sound Division

Charlene Regester (UNC-Chapel Hill)  
Associate Professor, Department of African and Afro-American Studies

*NEH funding was not applied to support the participation of Rhea Combs and Mike Mashon. Independent funding was provided by the College of Arts and Sciences at Indiana University – Bloomington.
Doug Reside (New York Public Library)
   Digital Curator, Library for the Performing Arts

Jacqueline Stewart (University of Chicago)
   Professor, Department of Cinema and Media Studies

Rachael Stoeltje (Indiana University)
   Director, Indiana University Libraries Film Archive

Andy Uhrich (Indiana University)
   Ph.D. student, Department of Communication and Culture

Gregory Waller (Indiana University)
   Professor, Department of Communication and Culture

John A. Walsh (Indiana University)
   Assistant Professor, Department of Library and Information Science

Dana White (Emory University)
   Goodrich C. White Professor of the Liberal Arts in the Graduate Institute of the Liberal Arts
APPENDIX II

Regeneration in Digital Contexts: Early Black Film
Conference and Workshop program
REGENERATION IN DIGITAL CONTEXTS: EARLY BLACK FILM

Of the hundreds of black-motion picture films produced since 1905, only a small percentage of original film prints are known to exist. Those that survive are often in fragmentary form or in markedly different versions, demanding close comparative analysis against other prints and documents widely dispersed across various institutions, including local censorship records, film scripts, newspaper accounts, and promotional images. Regeneration in Digital Contexts: Early Black Film will explore a challenging new avenue for the study of early black-motion picture film by identifying, as scholar Jacqueline Stewart suggests, the unmissed evidence value in what "we can learn from the singularity of each print...and what any existing print might teach us about the circulation, exhibition, and context of movies in this under-documented film culture. Indeed, when we think of each print as a unique artifact, we are encouraged to reconsider what we think of as a film's "content.""

On November 15, 2013, an interdisciplinarian group of scholars, curators, archivalists, and digital humanities specialists will convene to consider new methodologies and questions emerging through recent scholarship in early black-motion picture studies and their broader application to other marginalized media cultures with rich histories of material practices, such as early cinema and experimental film.

At the invitational workshop on November 16, 2013, participants will continue the previous day's agenda by establishing the technological ground researchers have identified as the modes of a new inquiry, through re-evaluation of existing best practices and capture technologies for digitization of original motion picture film artifacts, through demonstrations and assessments of existing open-source tools for presenting and analyzing moving image materials online, and through experimental approaches to integrating film among other forms of documentation in dynamic structures for discovery, presentation, and analysis.

REGENERATION IN DIGITAL CONTEXTS: EARLY BLACK FILM

BLACK FILM CENTER/ARCHIVE, INDIANA UNIVERSITY, BLOOMINGTON, IN

NOVEMBER 15-16, 2013
CONFERENCE - FRIDAY 11/15, 2013
LOCATION: INDIANA UNIVERSITY CINEMA (UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

8:30AM Coffee
9:00AM Welcome and Introduction
John Lucalitis, Associate Dean for Arts & Humanities, College of Arts and Sciences, Indiana University - Bloomington
Brian Gremey, Black Film Center/Archive
9:15AM Keynote Address
"Film, Race & Archives - The Odyssey of a Film Maker & Curator"
Shula Marks, Center of Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture
9:45AM The State of Research and Platforms for Access
Moderator: Greg Weller, Indiana University - Bloomington
Panel: Matt Bernstein, Emory University
Cora Cadle, Indiana University - Bloomington
Dane White, Emory University
11:15AM Break
11:30AM The Carrier as Content
Moderator: Rachel Steinhe, Indiana University - Bloomington
Panel: Jacqueline Stewart, University of Chicago
Mike Mashon, Library of Congress
Leah Kerr, The Academy Museum of Motion Pictures
Jean-Christopher Horak, UCLA Film & Television Archive
1:00PM Lunch - Registration Required
Location: Next-Marschall Grand Ballroom
2:45PM The Case of the Race Movie Circuit
Moderator: Barbara Klinger, Indiana University - Bloomington
Panel: Allyson Nadia Field, University of California, Los Angeles
Terry Franko, University of Pennsylvania
Barbara Teppa Lupack, Independent Scholar
Charlene Regler, University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill
4:15PM Break
4:30PM Closing Roundtable
Moderator: Michael T. Martin, Black Film Center/Archive
Panel: Rhea L. Combs, National Museum of African American History and Culture, Smithsonian Institution
Cora Cadle, Indiana University - Bloomington
Leah Kerr, The Academy Museum of Motion Pictures
Jacqueline Stewart, University of Chicago
Allison Nadia Field, University of California, Los Angeles
Jean-Christopher Horak, University of California, Los Angeles
Shola Lynch, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture
5:30PM Reception - By Invitation
Location: Black Film Center/Archive
7:00PM Film Screening: The Flying Ace
Location: IU Cinema
Open to the public. Free but ticketed.

WORKSHOP - SATURDAY 11/16, 2013
LOCATION: BLACK FILM CENTER/ARCHIVE (UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

Reconsidering how we define the content of a film print beyond the audiovisual information recorded within the frame, encompassing all of its physical characteristics, markings, and structures as a material artifact, introduces a series of questions bearing on the representation of film as a material object.

- How must we re-evaluate and amend current best practices for digitization of motion picture film which by design omit or obscure physical attributes of the original artifact?
- What digital tools might be turned to unconventional uses in representing original film artifacts such as static images for close examination and study?
- What might this representation of film as a material object offer a conceptual bridge for integrating audiovisual media within a wider network of related visual and textual documentation?

WORKSHOP (CLOSED REGISTRATION)
9:30AM Coffee
9:00AM Introduction
Brian Gremey, Black Film Center/Archive
9:15AM Session One
Reid Kropin, AV Preservation by reto.ch LLC
Andy Uhrich, Indiana University - Bloomington
Brian Gremey, Black Film Center/Archive
10:30AM Break
10:45AM Session Two
Will Crowe, Indiana University - Bloomington
John A. Walsh, Indiana University - Bloomington
Doug Restie, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts
12:00PM Lunch
1:00PM Closing Discussion
3:00PM Film Screening: Within Our Gates
Location: IU Cinema
Open to the public. Free but ticketed.

FILM SCREENINGS AT IU CINEMA
Live piano accompaniment by Dr. Philip Corli

FRIDAY, 11/15, 7PM
The Flying Ace (1924)
Director: Richard E. Norman
The Flying Ace tells the story of World War I flier returns Captain William Gates who returns home to assume the ownership of a moving picture company and names the film The Moving Picture Show. He is one of the earliest surviving films. Originally released in 1920, it was restored under the auspices of the Library of Congress. A single surviving print was discovered under the auspices of the Library of Congress, and transferred to the Library of Congress and restored by the Library of Congress.

SATURDAY, 11/16, 3PM
Within Our Gates (1919)
Director: Oscar Micheaux
Through his young protagonist, Sylvester Linley (Sybil Poiles), Oscar Micheaux etymically examines the lives of African American women, women, and North and South in his earliest surviving films. Lang Rouxly left, a single surviving print was discovered under the auspices of the Library of Congress. It was restored by the Library of Congress and transferred to the Library of Congress.
APPENDIX III

Black Camera journal and Indiana University News announcements
Digital Humanities

In November 2013, Black Film Center/Archive archivist Brian Graney and director Michael T. Martin will convene an interdisciplinary group of scholars, moving image archivists, and library professionals for a two-day conference and workshop to discuss the new methodologies and questions emerging through recent scholarship in early black-audience film studies and their broader application to other marginalized media cultures with rich histories of material practice. The program, “Representing Early Black Film Artifacts as Material Evidence in Digital Contexts,” is supported in part by a 2013 Digital Humanities Start-Up Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Of the hundreds of black-audience films produced in the first decades of the last century, only a small percentage of original film prints are known to exist. Those that survive are found in fragmentary form or in markedly different versions. In a 2011 article, Jacqueline Stewart proposed a challenging new avenue for this area of study by identifying unmined evidentiary value in what “we can learn from the singularity of each print . . . and what any existing print might teach us about the circulation, exhibition, and content of movies in this under-documented film culture. Indeed, when we think of each print as a unique artifact, we are encouraged to reconsider what we think of as a film’s ‘content.’”

Jan-Christopher Horak, director of the UCLA Film and Television Archive, notes that “unlike Hollywood features, which were released in sometimes hundreds of prints, Black independent film producers often struck only single prints, screening them until wearing them out before making a new print. These surviving prints reveal which film stocks were used, often include extraneous material cut in by exhibitors, and when the films were struck after the film’s initial release . . . such information is vital in reconstructing a work’s exhibition history.”

Reconsidering how we define the content of a film print to encompass all of its physical characteristics, markings, and structures as a material artifact introduces important questions bearing on how film is represented as
a digital object: How can we amend current best practices for digitization of motion picture film which by design omit or obscure physical attributes of the original artifact? What tools might be turned to unconventional uses in representing film artifacts digitally for close examination and study? And how might this representation of film as object offer a conceptual bridge for integrating audiovisual media within a wider network of related visual and textual documentation? “For the study of early African American cinema,” writes project advisor Stewart, “this exploration of the use of digital technologies to capture—rather than obscure—material details from surviving film prints will be an extraordinary boon, allowing scholars to perform closer analyses that take into account physical traces on these rare artifacts.”

The conference will be held on Friday, November 15, at the Indiana University Cinema; the workshop will be held on Saturday, November 16, at the Black Film Center/Archive. Khalil Gibran Muhammad, director of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, will present a keynote address. Other invited conference participants include Matthew Bernstein (Emory University); Allyson Field (UCLA); Terri Francis (University of Pennsylvania); Jan-Christopher Horak (UCLA Film & Television Archive); Leah Kerr (Academy Museum of Motion Pictures collections coordinator); Barbara Tepa Lupack (independent scholar); Mike Mashon (Library of Congress, Moving Image Section); Charlene Regester (UNC–Chapel Hill); Jacqueline Stewart (Northwestern University); and Dana White (Emory University).

Indiana University faculty and staff contributing to the conference and workshop program include: Cara Caddoo (American Studies); William Cowan (IU Libraries Software Development); Barbara Klinger (Communication and Culture); Rachael Stoeltje (IU Libraries Film Archive); Gregory Waller (Communication and Culture); and John A. Walsh (Library and Information Science).

Public Programs

During the spring 2013 semester, the Black Film Center/Archive coordinated and cosponsored a variety of screenings and related events. As the cornerstone of the film series Living King’s Legacy, part of the 2013 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration at Indiana University, the pioneering filmmaker and producer Madeline Anderson presented I Am Somebody (1970), her documentary on the 1969 Charleston, South Carolina, hospital workers’ strike. Other films in the series included Tim Reid’s Once Upon a Time . . . When We Were Colored (1995) and Clark Johnson’s Boycott (2001). With the
IU Black Film Center/Archive conference focuses on early black film artifacts

Nov. 4, 2013
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. — Of the hundreds of films produced for black audiences before 1960, only a small percentage of original film prints are known to exist, often in fragmentary form.

Scholars, archivists and digital humanities specialists will gather to discuss the issue on Indiana University’s Bloomington campus this month as part of the “Regeneration in Digital Contexts: Early Black Film” conference, hosted by the Black Film Center/Archive.

The conference comes on the heels of a recent announcement by IU President Michael A. McRobbie, unveiling a $15 million Media Digitization and Preservation Initiative aimed at preserving and making accessible in digital form the collections of video, recorded music, film and other material assembled by the university over its nearly 200-year history.

Brian Graney, archivist and head of public and technology services at the Black Film Center/Archive, said conference participants will consider how early black film artifacts are rendered as objects of study in transformative digital environments.

“For scholars looking beyond the film text at the contexts of its production, distribution, exhibition and regulation, prints have additional informational value as documents apart from their primary purpose as moving image content carriers,” he said. “Because access to original film elements in archives and museums has been, as President McRobbie noted, place-dependent and not readily accessible to scholars, digitization can potentially provide new means to support the growing research interests in aspects of film’s materiality beyond the archive—and possibly beyond the deterioration of the material itself.”

The conference is Nov. 16 at IU Cinema. Shola Lynch, filmmaker and curator of the Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division at the Gershington Center for Research in Black Culture, will present the keynote address. Additional details are available online, including a schedule, list of participants and registration information.

In conjunction with the conference, IU Cinema will screen two Library of Congress restorations of black-cast silent features, presented with live piano accompaniment by Philip Carri.

• 7 p.m. Nov. 15: “The Flying Ace” – Richard Norman’s story of World War I film-hero Capt. William Scales who returns home to solve the mystery of a missing daymater and save the life of the beautiful Ruth Santelle.

• 5 p.m. Nov. 16: “Within Our Gates” – Through a young protagonist, Oscar Micheaux critically examines the lines between races, classes, and North and South in his earliest surviving film.

All screenings at the IU Cinema are free but ticketed. Tickets can be obtained at the IU Auditorium Box Office from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, one hour before any screening at the cinema, or by phone at 312-665-1103 for a $10 service fee per order.

"Regeneration in Digital Contexts: Early Black Film" is sponsored by the Black Film Center/Archive and has been made possible in part by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities' Office of Digital Humanities. Additional support is provided by the College of Arts and Sciences and IU Cinema.
APPENDIX IV

Regeneration Conference online coverage: Jan-Christopher Horak and Reto Kromer

Submitted by Jan-Christopher Horak on November 29, 2013 - 9:00 am

I travelled to Bloomington, Indiana two weeks ago at the invitation of Brian Grassey, formerly of UCLA Film & Television Archive, to attend the conference “Regeneration in Digital Contexts: Early Black Film” (November 15-16, 2013). Brian is now the archivist for the Black Film Center/Archive at Indiana University, which, according to their website, was founded in 1981 as an archive “dedicated to collecting, preserving, and making available historically and culturally significant films by and about black people. The BFCA’s primary objectives are to promote scholarship on black film and to serve as an open resource for scholars, researchers, students, and the general public; to encourage creative film activity by independent black filmmakers; and to undertake and support research on the history, impact, theory, and aesthetics of black film traditions.”

Long under the directorship of founder Phyllis R. Kleiman, the Center’s Director is now Michael T. Martin, who attended our L.A. Rebellion symposium and is a contributor to our upcoming book. He is also the editor of Black Camera, which for twenty-eight years has been one of the only serial publications dedicated specifically to black cinema.

Funded by a National Endowment for the Humanities grant, the symposium featured a select group of archivists and scholars working on so-called race films, at black cast films produced for mostly segregated audiences during the 1910s to 1940s. Given that the producers and distributors of such films operated at the very fringes of the mainstream industry, the losses are far greater than with American silent features, where only about 10% are known to survive. For example, only two of Oscar Micheaux’s twenty-one silent films are known to exist, and no race films survive from before 1920.

Remaking films are often fragmentary or damaged, so that film historians have had to rely on other forms of evidence, including film stills, posters, payrolls, correspondence, scripts, distribution records, box office, newspapers, advertisements, reviews, contracts, censorship records, and even death certificates. After Shana Lynch’s moving keynote (she is the new curator of the Schomburg Center), scholars Matthew Bernstein, Dana White, Cara Caddo, Torri Francis, Barbara Tosh Lupack and Charlene Regester discussed various innovative ways they have tracked race film distribution and exhibition in local communities in the South, utilizing just such ephemera.
Another intellectual thread took its cue from Jacqueline Stewart's dictum that "we can learn from the singularity of each print... and what it might teach us about the circulation, exhibition, and content of movies in this under-documented film culture." (Film History, 2011) A panel of archivists, including my L.A. Rebellion co-curator, Jackie Stewart, myself, Mike Waskson, and Leah Kerr, discussed preservation issues relating to early black cinema. I reported on the many preservation problems we faced staging the L.A. Rebellion exhibition, emphasizing that they were similar to issues discussed with race films. After a closing roundtable that included many of the speakers, as well as Rhea L. Combs from the National Museum of African American History and Culture at the Smithsonian, we screened Richard E. Norman's The Flying Ace (1926), in a beautiful new print from the Library of Congress.

The second day's workshop, on the other hand, was dedicated to making materials, whether films or ephemera, available in digital form. In particular, the question was how can we represent material objects digitally and what digital tools were potentially available to analyze and make accessible the surviving documents. The speakers, Brian Grazer, Rob Kromer, Andy Ulrich, Will Cowan, John A. Walsh, and Doug Rosales demonstrated a host of technical and conceptual solutions, which were surprisingly free of techno-geek formulations, allowing people like me to finally understand how certain aspects of digitally work. I was particularly interested in the new digital tools, e.g. Popcorn Maker, Cinematica, Digital Formalism, Omeka, Simile and Neatline, which allow the scholar to segment, dissect, analyze, and present film and ephemera documents.

The official program ended with a matinee screening of Oscar Micheaux's Within Our Gates (1920), which seems more amazing—despite the visible signs of damage—every time I see it. In particular the way Micheaux directly and consciously refutes the many, many lies propagated by D.W. Griffith's Birth of a Nation (1915). That film was followed in the evening by a screening of Billy Woodberry's Bless Their Little Hearts (1964), and, on Sunday, Allee Sharron Lark's Your Child Comes Back to You (1978) and A Different Image (1982). All three films representing the L.A. Rebellion. Lark's Child was in fact preserved at UCLA from original negatives housed at the Black Film Center, once again demonstrating that the project of film history and preservation, whether African-American or otherwise, will depend on interarchival cooperation and the input of film scholars.

Regeneration in Digital Context: Early Black Film
15–16 October 2013 at the Black Film Center/Archive, Indiana University, in Bloomington, ID

- A digital bench for archives as an additional tool for film analysis?
- OCVE could be an inspiration for variant/versions comparisons of film:
  ocve.org.uk
- What’s about an interactive filmography on Afro-American cinema?
- Many exciting ideas for future research on early Black cinema by using digital tools. And also for edition of materials.
- Nick Mashon advocates for a stronger collaboration between archives and scholars.
- Brian Graeber investigates the materiality of the film strip. With gorgeous slides.
- Last presenter: Doug Reside, speaking very fast. Approximately 4–5 words per second. I guess...
- John Walsh on embedding metadata, using a document displayed at the UI Cinema that photographed yesterday with an iPhone.
  #TEI
- Will Cowan on #emeka
  emeka.org
- Andy Uhlich presents many funny tool to analyse image content. (And to create new content.) Yet what’s about sound?
- The workshop on digitisation and digital issues is running smooth... and deep.
- RT @jaurnick: @RetoKromer on #digitalpreservation: the archive must be able to work with the formats it produces
- I guess #absence could be the main topic of the last panel this afternoon. And now for the closing roundtable.
- Thank you very much, Mike Mashon! Your presentation has been the best ever. I have just to continue at the workshop tomorrow.
- Very exciting morning with a mix of points of view, combining content, related materials and technical driven investigations.
- My account is not working, therefore I cannot tweet from this conference. Sorry!
- Keynote Film, Race & Archives – The Odyssey of a Film Maker & Curator by Shala Lynch. A biography from the field.
  www.indiana.edu/regener8
APPENDIX V

Regeneration Conference website for videotaped and transcribed conference and workshop proceedings

URL: http://www.indiana.edu/~regener8/regeneration/
Regeneration in Digital Contexts: Early Black Film, organized by the Black Film Center/Archive, brought together an interdisciplinary group of scholars, moving image archivists, and technology specialists in digital humanities for a two-day conference and workshop held in Bloomington, Indiana November 15-16, 2013.

The conference program, November 15, 2013, engaged participants in discussing and articulating new methodologies and questions emerging through recent scholarship in early black audience film studies and their broader application to other marginalized media cultures with rich histories of material practices, such as early cinema and experimental film. Shola Lynch, curator of the Moving Image and Recorded Sound Archive at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, presented the keynote address. In conjunction with the conference, two films, The Flying Ace and Within Our Gates, were shown at IU Cinema.

The invitational workshop, November 16, 2013 continued the previous day's agenda by establishing the technological groundwork necessary to enact these modes of inquiry, through re-evaluation of existing best practices and capture technologies for digitization of original motion picture film artifacts; through demonstrations and assessments of existing open-source tools for preserving and analyzing moving image materials online; and through experimental approaches to integrating film among other forms of documentation in dynamic scholarly contexts for discovery, presentation, and analysis.
The Carrier as Content: Jacqueline Stewart

Welcome, Introduction, and Keynote Address

Panel One

Panel Two
The Carrier as Content: Rachael Stoddard
The Carrier as Content: Jacqueline Stewart
The Carrier as Content: Mika Meshon
The Carrier as Content: Leah Karr
The Carrier as Content: Jan-Christopher Horak
The Carrier as Content: Question and Answer Session

Panel Three
Closing Roundtable

Examining the characteristics of archival film prints as they survive in fragmentary and variant versions, Panel Two: The Carrier as Content evaluates these material manifestations of early black-audience films as presenting evidence for understanding their meaning and context.

Title
The Carrier as Content: Jacqueline Stewart
Workshop Session One: Andy Uhrich

Andy Uhrich: While we're switching computers, I'll briefly give an introduction. So I'm going. Frank asked me to talk about preexisting digital tools that can be used to analyze the visual content of moving images. But I'm not a computer programmer. I'm a film historian and an archivist. So I'm trying to look at these tools to see what possibilities they might offer us in these worlds. And so if people who have the skills and can describe these tools please jump in.

The other point, sort of getting back to Brian's [Graney] opening remarks about the relevance to the themes discussed yesterday in terms of loss, in terms of representation, in terms of materiality, the question is whether these tools address those issues or not.