

## **Southwest Screen Studies Network Inaugural Meeting**

April 25, 2008 at 2PM

Bill Douglas Centre at the University of Exeter

Present:

Phil Wickham, Chair (Bill Douglas Centre, University of Exeter)

Helen Hanson (SALL, University of Exeter)

Steve Neale (SALL, University of Exeter)

Dan North (SALL, University of Exeter)

Harriet Hawkins (Geography, Exeter)

Elayne Hoskin (Director, SW Film and TV Archive)

Sarah-Jane Meredith (Head of Creative and Audience Development, South West Screen)

Lucy Badrocke (Picture This, Bristol)

Sarah Street (University of Bristol)

Andrew Spicer (University of the West of England)

Charlotte Crofts (University of the West of England)

Patrick Croggan (University of the West of England)

Chris Rodrigues (University of Plymouth)

Martha Blassnigg (University of Plymouth)

Kevin Meethan (University of Plymouth)

Carolyn Ansell (University of Plymouth)

Tico Romao (University of Gloucestershire)

Karl Phillips (University College, Falmouth)

Margaret Shaw (Bath Spa University)

Andrew Nelson, minutes (University of Exeter)

Apologies:

Wendy Everett (University of Bath)

Brian Neve (University of Bath)

Paul Ward (Arts Institute of Bournemouth)

Trevor Hearing (University of Bournemouth)

Sherryl Wilson (University of the West of England)

Seth Giddings (University of the West of England)

Mark Bould (University of the West of England)

Ros Jennings (University of Gloucestershire)

Terence Rodgers (Bath Spa University)

Dan Paolantonio (Plymouth College of Art and Design)

Neil Rose (Plymouth College of Art and Design)

Tim Dickinson (Plymouth College of Art and Design)

### **1. Welcome**

Phil Wickham (PW) called the meeting to order shortly after 2PM and offered welcome to those in present and apologies from those unable to attend.

## **2. Aims and objectives of the Network**

PW stated that the aim of the Network was to make more cohesive links between those working in screen studies in disparate departments in various Universities, colleges and institutions across the South West. He proposed that formal meetings be held once per term, with other events, like research symposia, scheduled around those meetings. A website and email listserve will be established to disseminate and share information.

Steve Neale (SN) stressed the importance of regular meetings, both to pool and exchange information – what members are researching and teaching, what screen studies-related events are happening – and also to foster collaboration and collegiality. SN also emphasized the need for a rigid organisational structure for the first few years of the network's existence in order to drive the initiative and establish credibility.

PW added that Paul McDonald from the University of Portsmouth is interesting in established a comparable study network within his own region, and that the South West network will be a model for other regions in the UK.

Charlotte Crofts (CC) suggested that annual symposia could be organised, which would be hosted by different institutions each year. The group was in favour of this.

PW asked for a consensus on holding one meeting per term. There were no objections.

Karl Phillips (KP) asked whether themed “strands” would be highlighted within the network, as different members have different strengths. PW replied that there would be room for themed strands within the network.

Sarah Street (SS) raised the issue of funding, noting the need to set up a formal funding system for the future to ensure that members could attend if their institutions were unwilling to pay expenses. PW replied that the Network Fund within the AHRC might be an option in the future, but that the organisers were keen to establish the network first and then apply for future funding.

Sarah-Jane Meredith (SJM) questioned the group's provisional name of the South West Screen Studies Network, feeling that it could cause confusion and that it may be perceived as a South West Screen project. Various alternative suggestions followed and on reflection organisers have decided that ‘Screen Studies South’ is the best name going forward.

Helen Hanson (HH) said that, in addition to disseminating information about events and happenings at member institutions, the network could also be beneficial to postgraduates through the organising and publicising of research and training events.

CC stated the need to network with creative industries in the region, including archives and exhibition sites. SN added that the Network could be used to publicise festivals, visiting speakers and local cinemas. Publicising events and promoting participation will increase the profile of the region.

Tico Romao (TR) asked if anyone had had contact with Knowledge West. The group has its own money – would be worth contacting, and would likely be supportive. Several members questioned whether the group only represented the northern half of the region, but agree the group is worth contacting. TR will provide contact information.

Margaret Shaw (MS) suggested holding a conference to help launch the network. KP agreed, noting that a larger event would give the group momentum. There was support for this idea, and an agreement that any such event would be best scheduled for 2009.

### **3. Research round-up**

#### **UWE**

Andrew Spicer is preparing an AHRC research grant application based on the papers of British film producer Michael Klinger (producer of *Get Carter*).

Patrick Croggan notes that the school is going through restructuring. He is teaching a new film and philosophy course, which ties into an upcoming conference (July 4-6). Croggan is especially interested in the area of film and philosophy; also in animation, anime, computer games.

CC conducts research through film practice, investigating the impact of digital technology. She is interested in cinema as cultural practice; also archiving and preservation beyond the filmic text (other aspects of screen heritage). She is also part of a gender and culture research group.

#### **Gloucestershire**

TR has recently completed an MBA, examining entrepreneurship in American filmmaking. Other Gloucestershire faculty are working on European queer cinema (Robin Griffiths) and audience studies (Ros Jennings).

#### **Plymouth**

Chris Rodrigues teaches in Media Arts, a practice-based course. His research interests are linked to film practice: independent film, including exhibition and distribution, as well as exhibition of films of the SW. He is also interested in experimental uses of archival materials.

Martha Blassnigg teaches in the Faculty of Technology, and works within the discourse of contemporary media. She is interested in the history of technology in the early cinema

period, particularly audience research. She is working on an AHRC funding bid that examines the public history of early cinema and how materials are read mnemonically.

Kevin Meethan is interested in tourism as visual activity, including the ways that the SW has been constructed as a place. The next stage of his research is to examine visual materials within a social science context.

### **Bath Spa**

MS noted that the school's program is in its third year. They have just started a research centre for film and culture, and are hoping to have a conference in September 2009. Other faculty work on games (James Newman), gender and television (Rebecca Feasey) and black American films (MS).

### **Falmouth**

KP stated that teaching is presently the priority at Falmouth, to the frustration of some faculty members. This orientation is set to change in 2012 towards a greater focus on research. The program operates on the theory/practice model. Faculty members are working on Turkish, German and immigrant cinema, and on the impact of technology on aesthetics. A team project in development will examine art and artists on screen; they are talking to publishers, and a CFP should be out soon.

KP wants to run historiography unit on future cinema. As part of practice work new surround sound studios are being opened, and there are plans to develop new strand for sound/theory/practice.

### **Bristol**

SS is beginning a three year project on color film from 1915 to 1955, which will include hosting a major conference in July 2009, the CFP for which is available. This event will cross over into many aspects of screen studies, including archives, culture and technology.

Other faculty are working on African sound cinema and audiences in South Africa (Jacqueline Maingard); practice and documentary (Adams); archeology and film and television, performativity, place and space (Piccini); documentary photography (Metelerkamp).

Bristol also hosts a screen research group that attracts research from across the university's departments.

### **Exeter**

The Modern Languages department teaches European and world cinema, including French cinema (Hayward, Higbee, Handyside), Chinese cinema (Lim), Spanish cinema (Faulkner) and Italian cinema (Hipkins). A film practice program is also offered, with Don Boyd and Nic Roeg as visiting professors.

Harriet Hawkins is working on a project in the geography department that is attempting to mesh conceptions of film as a creative industry with the notion of film as cultural text (to be analyzed for regional ethnography). Others in geography working on film and geopolitics (Carter) and film and philosophy (Patterson). Presently six months into an AHRC project on “creative region,” examining the interaction between creative makers in the SW and their cultural projects. Questions include how does regional funding impact upon creative makers and the importance of the region in their work.

The English department teaches American, British and early cinema.

Dan North works on film technology and special effects, and is also interested in animation. A potential research network on speed and reception in cinema is in the early planning stages.

Joe Kember studies early British Cinema, working on a AHRC project on the history of moving image entertainment in the SW from 1840 to 1914. He is also interested in the face in silent cinema and silent film lecturers.

James Lyons works on the city and film, quality US TV, and is writing a book on *Miami Vice*.

HH works on questions of gender and genre, has recently finished a book on the female in film noir and the gothic film. Her next project is to excavate the history of sound effects in American cinema in the 1930s and 40s.

SN oversees a nearly completed project on papers and scripts donated by film producer Gavrik Losey. He has also recently done work on the Hollywood blacklist, which has resulted in a coedited book. Nearing completing is a co-written book on the history of large-scale, high-cost film from the 1890s to the present, focused on aesthetic characteristics and the industrial side of filmmaking (distribution, the history of distribution). Has recently become interested in the ways mainstream theatre relates to film (acting, staging, practices like roadshowing, ways of assembling productions).

PW, in addition to being curator of the BDC, is a television researcher. A book on *The Likely Lads* will be out in June.

#### **4. Research resources in the region**

**SW Film and Television Archive.** Located in Plymouth. In addition to television collections, the Archive holds a large collection of amateur films, dating from the turn of the century to the present.

Elayne Hoskin (EH) emphasized that the SWFTA is a rarely-used resource, but is eager for it to be viewed as a source of primary information for scholarly use. There is no on-line catalogue, but staff will work with researchers over email or in person.

**Bill Douglas Centre.** A public museum, but also a huge research operation. PW is keen for the Centre to be a resource for the entire region. The basis of the collection are artifacts amassed by Bill Douglas and Peter Jewell, which were donated to the University in the mid-90s. New materials are continually being added. Holds a very comprehensive collection of “film beyond the text” materials, including a large collection of cinema memorabilia. The collection is also strong on pre-cinema optical entertainments and early cinema and has papers donated by filmmakers.

## **6. Screen practice in the region**

CC noted that many across the SW were researching screen studies through practice, and that it would be good if an element of the network incorporated practice and pedagogy. Crofts added that, through her own work, she has industry links.

SJM said that South West Screen has very little funding. She noted that changes were taking place at the national level in archiving. Money from the screen heritage and digital archive fund are being put into public access. South West Screen has links with higher education, including placement schemes for students to work with production companies.

PW inquired about film festivals. Meredith replied that groups can apply to Southwest Screen, but the proposed event must be accessible to the public.

Lucy Badroke (LB) explained that Picture This is interested in artists' film. The agency works in partnership with an education programme. An emphasis is professional development, and Picture This is running a course with the University of Bristol. Picture This has also opened up a flexible exhibition space in Bristol.

EH and others noted the growing interest in the use of archival material in screen practice. PW pointed out there were a number of other small archives within the region which were involved in this kind of work.

CC said that the Journal of Media Practice symposium is anxious to have more papers submitted. The CFP is out.

CC then raised concerns regarding Skillset's establishment of a limited number of film academies for film practice. She noted that debates about the place of filmmaking in the academy, the use of practice to explore theory and filmmaking's status as a vocation were currently taking place.

SJM said that her organisation was focused on addressing the gaps in disseminating practice, which are on the technical side.

CC said it was difficult for the academy to keep pace with technology, and so UWE was teaching students to be adaptable. CC stressed the need to debate the relationship between industry and higher education. KP stated that regarding that relationship and the one with Skillset, it was likely “better to be in than out.”

TR said that the mandate for practical film education is unclear, and that he was hearing indications of a need for increased training in interactivity. Martha Blassnigg (MB) said that she found students who were trained in software programming and various media forms were delighted to work with archival materials.

## **7. Next meeting arrangements and conclusion.**

The group agreed to have the minutes posted on the network’s pages on The Bill Douglas Centre’s website [www.billdouglas.org](http://www.billdouglas.org) .

PW said he would establish an email list of members and asked group members to email any group news to him for distribution.

September, before term starts, is suggested as a time for the next meeting.

PW will look into adding a message board to the website, and will also add a list of member institutions to the site.

CC suggested that member profiles, or links to them, be put on the website.

Wickham added that it would be helpful if members could detail where screen studies was located (which department) at their institutions.

Wickham will also email a notice about the inaugural meeting to the MECSSA listserv.

SN thanked members for attending and it was agreed that the network was a very positive development that members were committed to progressing.

The meeting was adjourned at 4PM.