

Screen Studies South West meeting

04 March, 2008 at 2:30PM

The Bill Douglas Centre at The University of Exeter

Present:

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

Helen Hanson, Danielle Hipkins (University of Exeter)

Sarah Street (University of Bristol)

Anna Masiak, Kingsley Marshall (University College, Falmouth)

Martha Blassnigg (University of Plymouth)

Sarah-Jane Meredith (South West Screen)

Carolyn Ansell (South West Film and Television Archive)

Terry Rodgers (Bath Spa University)

Sherryl Wilson (UWE)

Lisa Stead, minutes (University of Exeter)

Apologies:

Steve Neale, Dan North, James Lyons, Song Lim, Joe Kember, Andrew Nelson
(University of Exeter)

Jason Whittaker (University College, Falmouth)

Michael Punt, Phil Ellis (University of Plymouth)

Margaret Shaw (Bath Spa University)

Brian Neve, Wendy Everett (University of Bath)

Mark Bould, Andrew Spicer (UWE)

Elayne Hoskin

Trevor Hearing (Bournemouth University)

1. Welcome

Phil Wickham (PW) called the 3rd meeting of SSSW to order at 2:30pm, recapping on the previous meeting and directing those present to the minutes posted on the website.

2. Research roundup

Falmouth

Anna Masiak (AM) gave an update on the upcoming conference 'Digital Media Futures' to be held September 10—11th 2009. The conference will focus on allowing practitioners in digital media to meet with digital media theorists. The structure will generally follow that of a normal conference, but will be accompanied by the exhibition of films. A call for papers was issued in January and received a strong response, but the deadline may be extended to Easter in order to encourage further submissions. Keynote speakers have been confirmed and will soon be announced on the website. A further keynote is being considered, and AM asked for suggestions.

AM also said that Jason Whittaker is about to publish a book on Web Design with Routledge.

Kingsley Marshal (KM) discussed his work at Falmouth restructuring studies to combine practical elements with theory, and improve the sound quality of student film output.

Exeter

Danielle Hipkins (DH) discussed the Modern Languages department conference 'Re-envisioning the Child in Italian Film' held at Exeter in July of last year. Phil Wickham (PW) explained the structure of the modern languages film course at the university, which combines teaching and practice. PW also discussed Mike Figgis' talk held at Exeter the previous week where the filmmaker discussed his work and offered advice to new filmmakers working with digital technology, and Don Boyd's upcoming visit to give a talk at CRIFS. DH suggested Mike Figgis as a possible additional keynote for the Digital Media conference at Falmouth.

PW discussed the upcoming conference on moving image entertainment in the South West, 1800-1914, an AHRC funded event led by Joe Kember and John Plunkett, foregrounding their work with entertainment histories in the south west region. The event will take place between the 14th and 16th April 2009.

The Screen funded one day symposium 'Studies Beyond the Screen' will also take place at Exeter on the 25th April 2009, focusing on archival resources in academic research, with speakers including Andrew Spicer, Ian Christie, Sarah Street, Steve Neale and Peter Jewell.

PW discussed a number of different events and resource bids related to the BDC, in particular a series of BDC open lectures, the first of which will be given by Robin Allan, who donated Disney materials to the archive last year. Allan will lecture on the 29th May. PW said that the hope is to host similar events in the future.

PW also talked about the upcoming 'Rethinking Film History' event at which he will be presenting, which will focus on the creation of film histories from different materials. Portsmouth will be organising the event but it will be held in London on the 8th and 9th of July, run by Paul MacDonald at the Royal Geographical Society venue. PW directed further inquiries about the event to Paul MacDonald. Steve Neale will also be speaking.

Plymouth

Carolyn Ansell (CA) talked about encouraging people to use the South West Film and Television Archive, and developing the archive's relationship with universities beyond Plymouth. She discussed recent AHRC proposals and the positive feedback received from these. She also mentioned how the archive is working with a production company on an EU media project, from which will a book will be produced.

Martha Blassnigg (MB) talked about work at the University into memory and perception in the archive, and how this needs to be picked up again for new funding applications.

Bristol

Sarah Street (SS) gave an update on the 'Colour and the Moving Image' conference to be held 10-12 July 2009. The call for papers is now closed and has garnered a very good response. SS encouraged the registration of non-speakers to the event now the CFP is closed. The event is funded by Screen as part of its 50th anniversary programme, and will be an opportunity to see early colour films. Speakers at the event had a say in compiling the programme of films to be screened. Tom Gunning and Laura Mulvey will be among the keynote speakers. The website has full details of the event.

SS gave an update on the Screen Research@Bristol network and its planned events, including a mini event held tomorrow entitled 'A Close Up on Close Ups.' An event on Screen Acting will take place on the 29th May, with speakers including Steve Neale and Alex Clayton—SS will update on details as plans for this develop.

SS explained how the Screen Research@Bristol initiative is being considered as a University 'theme' by the arts faculty at Bristol, and suggested that were this to develop it would be a good way for new projects and collaborations to grow across the south west network.

SS talked about the BFI recently visiting Bristol to demonstrate the In View project, a web-based resource which will enable free HE access to film resources. The project is planned to launch in the next few months. SS discussed how the resource would make new projects possible with the greater availability of resources.

Bath Spa

Terry Rodgers (TR) discussed the continuation of a joint project with Nottingham Trent University for the creation of a national video games archive. TR suggested that this project might be relevant to the research symposium that SSSW will hold at Falmouth. TR discussed where the archive would be based, explaining that technical problems have made it difficult to decide how and where to establish a digital archive and preserve material. TR noted that individuals putting in for project funding were waiting for the March RE result.

PW asked for a general reaction to REF replacing RAE, and whether it posed any potential problems for the Screen Studies community in terms of funding.

SS suggested that its effect on funding would be that the focus would be less on the quality of individual items and more on collaborative bids. The group agreed that it would not in general make funding more difficult to obtain.

UWE

Sherryl Wilson (SW) talked about work at UWE on a project entitled 'No Such Thing as Society?' in collaboration with Bournemouth Media school, focusing upon Thatcherism, with reference to TV drama and radio etc. A Thatcher conference will soon be held, indirectly related to the 'Society' project, marking a critical resurgence of interest in the 1980s and Thatcher's legacy. The conference is scheduled for May, and the CFP will be re-issued to attract further submissions.

PW said he would redistribute the call for papers to the MECCSA mailing list, and also mentioned the upcoming research seminar on the 19th March to be given by Steve Shaviro at UWE: 'Post-cinematic affect: Grace Jones and Justin Timberlake.' PW said he would send the details of these events around the mailing list.

3. Screen Heritage Southwest

Sarah-Jane Meredith (SJM) talked about the Digital Archive Fund (DAF) for regional archives, focusing upon improving public access to archive film materials, as opposed to preservation. The first round of discussion for the use of these funds took place in February, over-viewing a range of projects to potentially be supported. One project working from the Museum in Barnstable is the 1960s cinema bus, which will locate and reinterpret archive material in North Devon.

Another significant project involves work with the animation production company Arthur Cox, where material will be collected relating to specific locations in Bristol, using technology such as GPS to show how particular areas of the city have changed over time. Private sponsorship will help fund the project which is in the initial stages of exploring the potential of materials and technology. SJM also talked about how they are working with the Somerset Rural Museum in Glastonbury to encourage people to use their resources.

SJM said that she would circulate information about the DAF grants to those interested. SJM discussed the structure of the Screen Heritage funds, which allocated funds towards screen heritage strategy across four strands, with the bulk of funds going to the BFI and the three other strands focusing on revitalising the regions, digitization and education. The initial role for the regional archives has been to assess what resources are significant for preservation and access. Funds should be released by the end of March.

TR asked what materials had been identified for preservation. SJM said that the approach has been as wide as possible, to find all moving image resources within the region, from private to specialist materials. The hope is that with the DAF fund a greater number of previously unknown collections will come to the fore. SJM asked for members to pass on information of any collections that might be relevant of which they are aware.

The digitization strand of the DAF project will focus on a measure of standardisation across national film archiving, with the idea of creating a central union catalogue digitized to the same standard and format. Funds will be handled by Screen Yorkshire.

SWFTA

CA discussed the problems facing SWFTA regarding premises and the deterioration of the building. Hopefully a property has been identified in the city to which materials can be relocated. CA identified the archived tapes as the primary concern in terms of damage from their current housing.

CA talked about the status of the HTV archive held at Plymouth. Due to storage issues there are national plans to centralise these materials at Leeds. CA was unsure whether the HTV materials would stay with SWFTA, but a strong case can be made for keeping the materials due to their connection to the region.

PW suggested that SWFTA network with SSSW in the creation of bids for academics working with the collection supporting the case for keeping it at Plymouth. PW noted that Cathy Johnson at Royal Holloway had expressed an interest in the past in local television—might be worth pursuing. CA keen to talk to potential partners on projects like this, said that she needed to speak to ITV about this and hopefully move things forward.

4. Network Symposia

Falmouth

AM talked about Falmouth hosting the first symposia event to come out of the SSSW network in early June 2009. The event will be a small symposium inviting postgraduates to present their ongoing research and work in progress.

PW suggested putting out a call for papers and designing panels around the responses. AM suggested holding the event in a cinema space if the response is large enough. Group agreed to aim for around 8 to 10 speakers, predominantly postgrads drawn from the region.

PW suggested 5th June as preliminary date, and will circulate information to see if other institutions have any major problems with fixing the symposia for this date. PW emphasised that the event would be intended as an opportunity for new academics and postgraduates to present their research with a local audience before they develop it. All agreed this was a good idea. PW said that there would be no registration fee charged.

AM will draft a page with the initial information and send it on to PW.

Bath Spa

PW said that Margaret Shaw had been in touch and was keen to host a network symposia event on animation as a key strength of the region, with the aim to provide a good contrast with the broader focus on the Falmouth event.

TR discussed the proposal for this event to be a one day symposium held at Bath Spa focusing on animation and games. The emphasis would be on mixing theory

and practice. A provisional date for the event is the 5^h September. This event would be more formal than the Falmouth symposium, and would involve a small fee kept as a low as possible. There would be a call for papers and keynote speakers, but it would not be overly formal. The audience would potentially be made up of postgrads, academics and practitioners. TR said that he would be liaising with PW over the next couple of weeks, publicising the event for September.

5. Other projects

PW raised an idea put forward by David McErlane(DM), responsible for screenings at Peninsula Arts Centre in Plymouth, for a South West film tour, where funds would be allocated to have filmmakers tour the region and speak at various institutions and venues. David has spoken with Chris Rodrigues to put the idea out to different venues. The notion of a tour for is motivated by the problems of getting filmmakers to visit the region. The idea would be to pool resources and funds to enable speakers to travel around giving talks to students and holding workshops. Various regional institutions have specific relationships with individual filmmakers—these resources could be pooled and shared to some extent.

PW called for suggestions as to how the project might be funded and made ongoing. Helen Hanson (HH) suggested AHRC practice grants as a possibility.

(KM) added that formalising a guest lecture series is made difficult by problems of location, and therefore the idea of a tour is appealing. Group all voiced similar problems with getting guest speakers out to the SW region and identified it as a key problem.

TR raised the point that it is difficult for distinguished filmmakers to find time for an extended visit as opposed to a one-off trip to an institution. A five day tour may be too demanding on their time. The group agreed that while the tour was a good idea, there are logistical problems that would need to be worked through. PW will send an email looking for a general response as to whether South West institutions would support the initiative. CA suggested that some kind of website listing a generally calendar of events where speakers were visiting institutions in the region would be beneficial.

TR discussed the possibility of a South West Screen representative coming to institutions to present about their work, since students are not aware of what SWS does. TR spoke of a strong student interest in the policy dimension of film, which SWS could bring to the forefront by coming to institutions and talking about what they do. PW suggested making contact with Sarah-Jane and Caroline Norbury, head of SWS.

6. Other Business

PW asked if meeting times on Wednesdays were working well for the group. Group agreed to keep meetings at this time, and to set the next meeting at the

Falmouth symposium event, and then return to Exeter early in the new term after summer.

HH asked if PW would be willing to put together a members list for SSSW including brief information about research interests and institutions. PW agreed to send a message out asking for people's details.

Meeting was adjourned at 4.20.