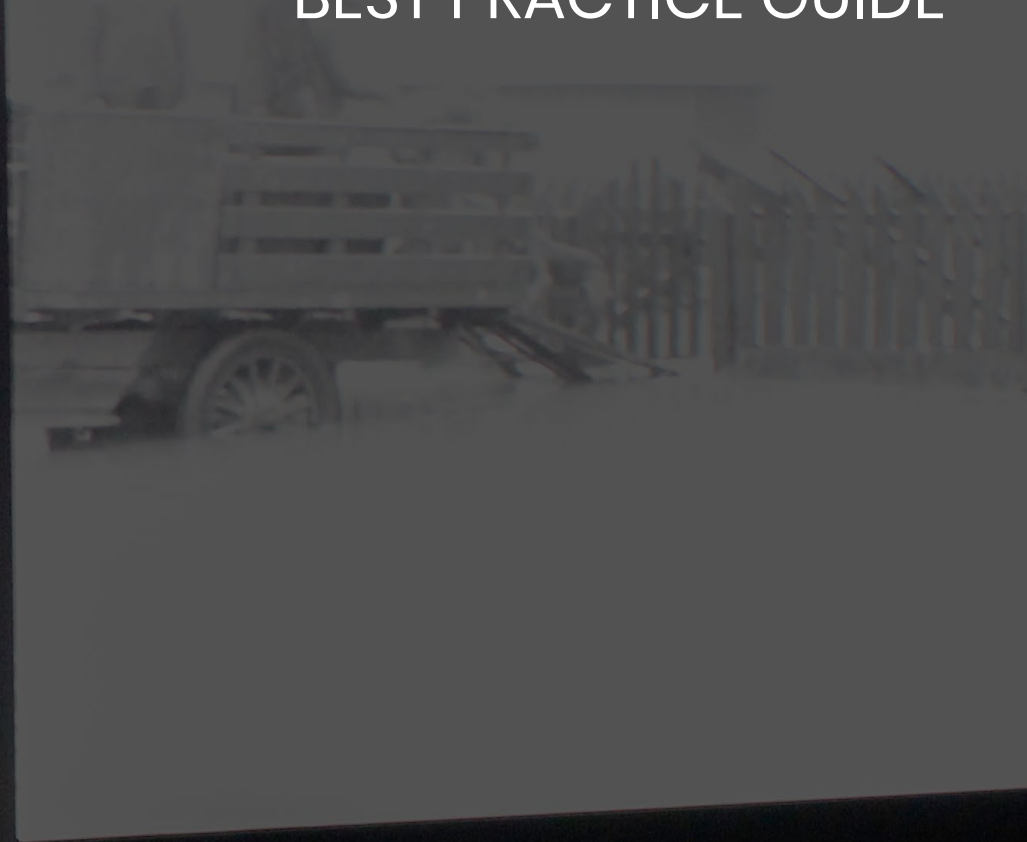


SCREEN HERITAGE

BEST PRACTICE GUIDE



INTRODUCTION

This Best Practice Guide has been produced by the BFI Film Audience Network, in collaboration with the Regional and National Film Archives, to support exhibitors to plan and deliver screen heritage events.

The guide has been created to complement Changing Times: a multi-year, nationwide screen heritage programme led by Film Hub North on behalf of the BFI Film Audience Network. Changing Times provides exhibitors with funding to produce screen heritage events that celebrate the moving image collections of the UK's public film archives. Exhibitors are encouraged to explore new ways of screening archive material, experiment with exciting event formats and forge new collaborations with partners across the archive and wider cultural sectors.

We've produced this guide to nurture these ambitions and increase exhibitors' confidence in working with archive film. This document builds on existing archive resources (listed later) and draws on the experience gained and lessons learned in the first two years of Changing Times from 2018-2020. It can be read in its entirety for an overall introduction to screening archive film, or you can consult individual sections for information on specific topics like programming, rights clearances or live scores.

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GETTING STARTED

What is archive film?

Archive film can be any form of moving image work from 1895 to the present day. It includes feature films, documentaries, newsreels, silent era productions, commercial and public information films, amateur home movies, video collections and regional television broadcasts.

The UK's film archives have been preserving our moving image history since the 1930s. Within their collections are an abundance of voices and stories - some known, some forgotten - that make up our collective past. Uncovering these stories presents exhibitors with a huge range of programming opportunities, as well as the chance to showcase their curatorial creativity and surprise their audiences.



Why screen archive film?

There is a common belief that archive film screenings are small, quaint events, attracting a niche but loyal audience. However, in practice, programming archive film can open up numerous exhibition possibilities that appeal to a broad range of audiences. Local interest screenings, historical interventions, retrospective feature programmes, live musical accompaniments and immersive, experimental events are all options when programming archive film.

Archive film projected on the big screen has a special ability to make history come alive. It can offer escape through nostalgic journeys into the past or shed unexpected light on contemporary issues, offering insights outside of congested newsfeeds and modern-day media representations.

Screen heritage events can enhance your core cinema programme, letting programmers go beyond the cycle of new releases and canonical classics, and broadening audiences' experience in the process. Events showcasing rare moving image works or special interest films can also attract new audiences to venues, helping organisations to engage new communities and groups, and expand their audiences in the long-term.

How do I work with archive film?

For programmers, the process of selecting, securing and screening archive film can at first seem daunting. Issues around archive material availability, rights clearances and costs, and technical demands can discourage film programmers from working with archive film on a regular basis.

While the process is not the same as booking a film with a distributor, archive staff are happy to work with exhibitors to get screen heritage material in front of audiences. To help make the process of finding, securing and screening archive film as effective as possible, we've put together a checklist for exhibitors planning to collaborate with the archives.



ARCHIVE CHECKLIST

- **Research** - Before contacting the archive, conduct some initial research to identify material that may be suitable for your event. Most archives have websites which you can use to search their collections. Note down the titles and reference numbers of your chosen films from your keyword search, but be aware that not all material may be available to you.
- **Communicate** - Get in touch with the archive at the earliest opportunity when developing your project. Explain your vision to the archivists and draw on their knowledge of the collection to find out what material is available, what is achievable within the timeframe/budget and how the archive can support your project.
- **Plan** - Allow sufficient time for developing your project. Time will be required for additional research, agreeing costs and confirming a schedule of work with the archive. The archive will need time to clarify the copyright position of your chosen titles and produce viewing copies where appropriate. Archives often do not own rights to the films in their collection; copyright needs to be cleared with right holders and this may lengthen the project development process.
- **Budget** - Confirm all costs associated with curating, licensing and delivering archival material for public screenings - and budget accordingly. Costs can differ depending on the type of screening, the format of the film, the rights context of your chosen titles and the work required of the archive.
- **Collaborate** - The archive is more than a media resource and there may be opportunities to collaborate with their staff when developing your project. Archives have considerable experience in audience facing activity and could contribute to the creative development of your project or the events themselves - for example, by curating films or participating in screenings.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

After two years of supporting exhibitors to experiment with archive film through Changing Times, we've been able to identify the key queries that programmers raise when developing a screen heritage project. Below you'll find a list of the most frequently asked questions, covering everything from rights to costs to getting in contact with your local archive.

1. Where can I access archive material?

There are 13 Regional and National Film Archives in total across the UK. A full list of these public film archives can be found in the directory at the end of this document, along with links to their online catalogues. Beyond this, there are numerous specialist moving image collections that can be sourced to compliment your programme curation. See below for more details.

2. Where can I license repertory feature films?

Repertory features can be licensed from a variety of sources - the right licensing option for you will depend on your film programme and the context of your screening.

Some film distributors manage bookings for their own back catalogue titles directly, while some represent libraries on behalf of other rights holders. Rights may also be held by the filmmakers or other organisations.

Distributors with extensive catalogues of classic films include the BFI, Filmbankmedia, the MPLC and Park Circus. These distributors work variously across the theatrical and non-theatrical sectors. A useful list of distributors can be found on the Independent Cinema Office's website, and your industry peers may be able to help you track down rights for a particular title.

3. Can I book a ready-made package of archive film?

Some of the Regional and National Film Archives will have pre-existing regionally specific packages available, so it's worthwhile getting in touch with the relevant archive to see if they have any programmes that will fit within your project.

4. Do I need a license to screen archive material?

The majority of the moving image material held in the film archives is not yet in the public domain - i.e. outside of copyright restrictions and therefore free to screen. That means you will need to pay a licence fee in order to make use of the film or video material in any audience-facing project. A licence allows you to screen the work in a specified way for a limited period of time.

5. Why are archive rights complex?

Any given film in the archive may have a different copyright context and securing clearance with rights holders can be drawn out. Rights can be transferred or shared among various parties - in cases like these, all parties will need to be contacted before the material is cleared for screening. Third Party Rights, for example, involve parties who could indirectly claim certain rights to the footage. eg. an artist's music featured in the licensed footage. So it pays to plan your project in good time.

6. How can the archive collaborate on my project?

Archives deliver their own screenings with a variety of partners, such as cinemas, film festivals, mixed-arts centres and community venues. Their staff have experience of introducing screenings, providing historical context alongside films, speaking on panels and overseeing workshops. Archives are typically eager to develop new audiences for their growing collections, so they will be open to building new partnerships and trying different exhibition approaches.

7. How much marketing lead-in do I need?

Project timelines will vary depending on your organisational capacity, the complexity of your event and the amount of audience development required. As a minimum, we suggest allocating 12 weeks for project planning, development, marketing and event delivery. At least 6 weeks of this period should be dedicated to building audience awareness.

8. Can I screen online?

A separate online license will be required for online screenings. Be aware: these costs are likely to be relatively high compared to licensing for theatrical/non-theatrical events.



PROGRAMMING IDEAS

Looking for inspiration on how you can work with archive film? Below we've highlighted a few different approaches based on projects supported through the first two years of Changing Times.

In 2018, organisations were supported to respond to the theme of Women's Histories; celebrating the work of female filmmakers and marking the centenary of the 1918 Representation of the People Act. While in 2019, organisations were supported to respond to the theme of Shifting Ground; highlighting stories of environmental transformation and the historical precedents of the current climate crisis.

Different programmers embraced the themes in different ways, producing events that varied from traditional archive screenings to experimental installations. Read on to find out more about the sort of approaches open to you and what they can bring to your screenings.

Guest speakers

Inviting a guest speaker to contribute to your screen heritage event is one of the easiest and most effective ways of adding extra value to your screening. Select your speakers based on what they can bring to your screening - this might be academic or curatorial insight, lived experience of the history on screen, or expertise in a contemporary issue which connects to your film programme.

Guest speakers can provide a brief contextual introduction before the film, accompany footage as a commentator, or contribute to a post-screening Q&A. Remember to consider event timings and formats, and ask your audiences for feedback on what worked and what didn't. You could also tap into speakers' curatorial insights by publishing programme notes, video essays or podcasts.

Guest Speaker - Case Study

'Kitty the Telephone Girl' and other Working Women in Early Cinema
Hippodrome Silent Film Festival - March 2019

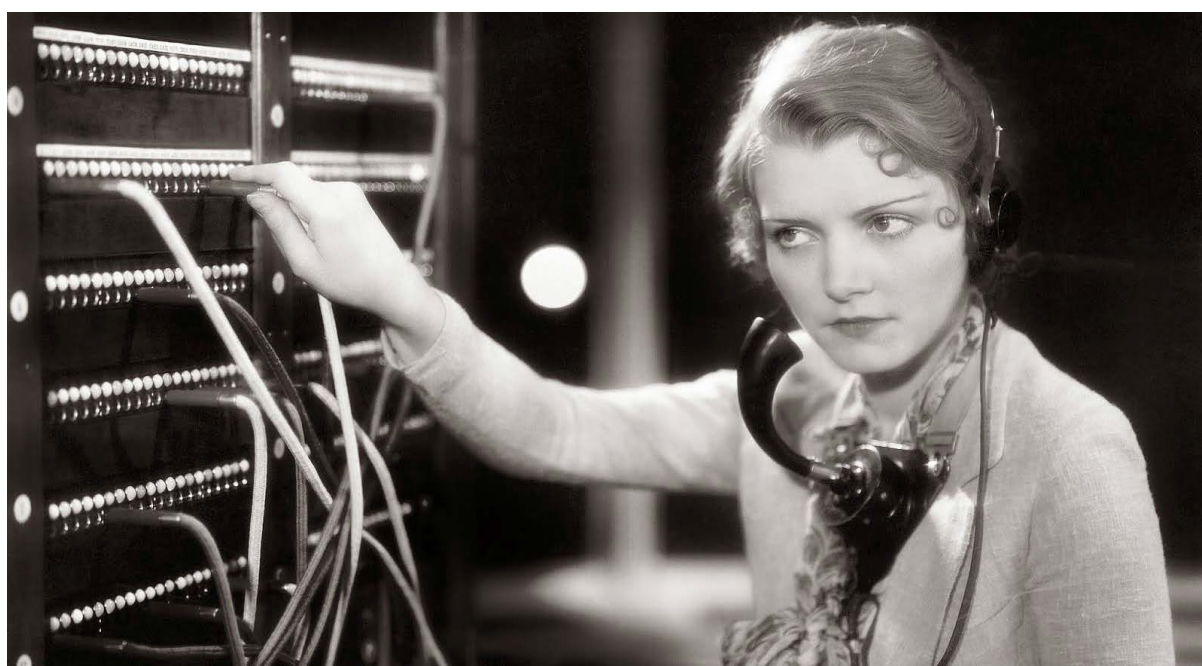
Hippodrome Silent Film Festival preambled their 2019 closing night gala screening of *Hindle Wakes* (1931) with an illustrated lecture from silent film expert Dr Lawrence Napper.

His talk, 'Kitty the Telephone Girl' and other Working Women in Early Cinema, responded to *Hindle Wakes*' controversial portrayal of a strong-minded young woman who defies traditional social and familial expectations.

Drawing on footage from a number of UK screen heritage collections - including the BFI National Archive, National Library of Scotland's Moving Image Archive and Yorkshire Film Archive - Dr Napper presented other British films of the period featuring independent working women and which showcased the expanded opportunities for women outside of domestic roles. Funded as part of Changing Times: Women's Histories.

"My friends and I feel so fortunate to be receiving a silent film education - a potentially rarefied subject is brought to the layperson in such an accessible way."

Audience member, Hippodrome Silent Film Festival



Co-Curation

Co-curation is, simply, the act of working with external partners to help develop projects. This might include working with expert programmers or community groups to select films, or working with your event's intended audiences to inform wider project development - for example, by having audiences shape your marketing materials, choice of venue or event logistics.

Effective co-curation partnerships are mutually beneficial. Your project might access specialist curatorial insight or forge a deeper connection with local audiences, while project partners can receive employment opportunities or enjoy an event that's more relevant to them.

Co-Curation - Case Study

Recycle Cinema - Cinema Nation - Nov/Dec 2019

Liverpool based Cinema Nation hosted Recycle Cinema in late 2019 as a community engagement event exploring how film can help people connect with, protect and project the environment.

Asking audiences "Why make new films when old films are boss?!" - the programme provided members of the local community with the chance to digitise their own personal film archives, learn more about the role of archivists and the importance of preserving stories, and watch films demonstrating how archive material can engage with the climate crisis.

Guest contributors for the event included local youth and refugee groups, curators and filmmakers, and representatives from the North West Film Archive. Funded as part of Changing Times: Shifting Ground.

"The Recycle Cinema launch event showcased a range of films about the environment and I particularly enjoyed the ensuing panel discussion that aired different opinions about the value and relevance of archive film. It was a new experience for me and helped us to make connections with local filmmakers. Footage has since been deposited at the Archive as a direct result of this event."

North West Film Archive

Experimental or Immersive Events

Experimental and immersive events go beyond the limits of traditional screenings and can provide audiences with unique and exploratory experiences of archive film.

Some approaches to immersive events include gallery-style installations where archive footage sits alongside other artforms or production elements, or is projection mapped onto a specific location. Pop-up screening booths can also establish temporary public archives in unexpected or especially meaningful places.

These types of events challenge perceived notions of what screen heritage is and who or what it's for. Taking a more experimental approach to your archive film screenings can help your organisation engage different audiences and develop new creative partnerships.



Experimental Events - Case Study

Margate Time Warp - Margate Film Festival - October 2019

Margate Time Warp was a pop-up film archive that set up shop in a corner of Dreamland, the town's much-loved vintage amusement park, for 5 days in October 2019.

Time Warp told the story of Margate - and, in turn, of Dreamland itself - from 1925 to 2019. Footage from Screen Archive South East and the BFI

National Archive charted the sights and sounds of the town's history - from its initial boom as a must-visit seaside resort to its decline in the late 20th century, and its regeneration in recent years.

Setting the archive up at Dreamland was an effective choice for event organisers Margate Film Festival. Not only did the park feature in much of the footage, it's also a very visible, familiar and accessible location for Margate locals - this allowed the festival to reach audiences who might not have thought of attending a traditional archive screening. Funded as part of Changing Times: Shifting Ground.

"We had audiences of all ages and backgrounds popping in to watch on their way in/out of Dreamland, many of whom were not previously aware of the film festival... it has been delightful to work with Screen Archives South East - the material was very well received by all audiences, enjoyable to put together and will hopefully inspire future projects using archive material too."

Margate Film Festival

Live Scores

Experimental and immersive events go beyond the limits of traditional screenings and can provide audiences with unique and exploratory experiences of archive film.

Live score events are one of the most established approaches to adding extra value to archive and silent film screenings. Incorporating live performance into screenings provides audiences with a uniquely immersive experience and can make silent works more accessible to audiences used to sync sound.

When planning a live score event, additional considerations apply such as rights clearances, your musicians' technical, logistical and financial requirements as well as your approach to event production. While these factors are likely to increase event costs, bear in mind that premium ticketing options are also a possibility for this type of event.

Live scores needn't be restricted to silent era films or traditional instrumentation either. Innovative new scores and soundtracking for more contemporary titles are both options.

Case Study - Live Scores

The Last of England - Palace International Film Festival - Late 2019

Palace International Film Festival toured *The Last of England* - Derek Jarman's 1986 impressionistic, dystopian elegy for contemporary English culture - with a new live score to 5 venues across the UK.

The score, an improvised piece performed by a trio of musicians, was as experimental as the film itself. Drawing on English folk music, it featured violin, guitar, bass, home-made flutes and amplified objects. Musician Joe Summers described it as: "Not a traditional score. There's no actual notation. It's essentially a guide for improvisation that tells people how to play rather than what to play. It takes some ideas from the visuals on screen and tries to translate that into sound."

As this was a brand new score overlaying the film's existing soundtrack, Palace International Film Festival had to factor this in when securing screening rights. Working with the BFI, they contacted the Jarman estate and were granted permission to go ahead with the screenings. Funded as part of Changing Times: Shifting Ground.

"This project proved to us that archive film does have an LGBTQ audience and that there is an opportunity for us to nurture this as part of our long-term audience development."

Palace International Film Festival



DIRECTORY

Regional and National Film Archives

BFI National Archive

Established in 1935, the BFI National Archive holds one of the largest film and television collections in the world. Dating from the earliest days of film to the live capture of current television content, the collection contains nearly a million titles. Using the latest preservation methods, we care for a variety of obsolete formats so that future generations can enjoy the UK's film heritage. [Visit their website.](#)

The Box Plymouth

The Box, Plymouth, is home to the largest regional film archive in the UK. As the regional archive for the South West of England, it covers an area from Gloucestershire to the Isles of Scilly and is responsible for the conservation, preservation and dissemination of the moving image heritage of this region, working in partnership with other heritage and cultural entities within the region and beyond. It holds the Westward Television and TSW-Television South West independent television collections, and a significant number of donated film collections, both amateur and professional. [Visit their website.](#)

East Anglian Film Archive (EAFA)

The East Anglian Film Archive is a regional film archive wholly owned by the University of East Anglia. Established in 1976, and part of the University since 1984, EAFA contains a collection of thousands of films and television programmes from 1896 to the present day, including unique collections from Anglia Television, BBC East, and the Institute of Amateur Cinematographers. The collection includes approximately 75,000 catalogue titles and 148,000 physical items in total in the vaults. [Visit their website.](#)

London's Screen Archives (LSA)

London's Screen Archives enables Londoners see their past come alive on film. Managed by Film London, we are a unique network of historic film collections that cares for, collects and screens heritage film across the city. Together we preserve London's rich film heritage from feature films to home movies, public information films, newsreels, and records of the capital's many different industries. [Visit their website.](#)

Media Archive for Central England at the University of Lincoln (MACE)

The Media Archive for Central England is the public screen archive for the East and West Midlands. An independent charity and company based at the University of Lincoln, MACE acquires, catalogues, preserves and makes widely available moving image materials that inform our understanding of the diverse cultures and histories of communities between the Lincolnshire coast and the Welsh border. [Visit their website.](#)

North West Film Archive at Manchester Metropolitan University (NWFA)

Established in 1977, North West Film Archive preserves moving images made in or about the North West of England for the education and enjoyment of the region's people. Thanks to the continued support of Manchester Metropolitan University, and over 2,000 depositors, the NWFA has established a collection which is both regionally specific and internationally significant. There are over 50,000 items in the collection currently, with more acquired annually. [Visit their website.](#)

Northern Ireland Screen's Digital Film Archive (DFA)

Launched in November 2000 as part of the British Film Institute's Millennium Project, Northern Ireland Screen's Digital Film Archive (DFA) is a free public access resource. Constantly updated and expanding, the DFA contains hundreds of hours of moving image titles, spanning from 1897 to the present day. Primarily focused on Northern Irish society, the collection also documents pre-Partition Ireland and contains material of interest to wider UK and international audiences. Within the archive you will find items covering the breadth of moving image genres; broadcast news, feature films, television dramas, sport, documentaries, animation, light entertainment, amateur footage, newsreels and more. [Visit their website.](#)

National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive

Scotland's national collection of moving image is held at the National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive.

Many of the archive's items are unique and you cannot see them elsewhere. The collections are largely non-fiction and reflect:

- Scottish social, cultural and industrial history

- The lives of ordinary Scots across the generations
- The achievements of Scottish film-makers in the craft of film production

Manuscript, printed material and memorabilia relating to the history of film-making and the cinema-going business in Scotland since 1896 are also part of the Moving Image Archive. [Visit their website.](#)

Screen Archive South East (SASE)

Screen Archive South East is a public sector moving image archive serving the South East of England. Part of the University of Brighton, the archive's collections of magic lantern slides, films, video, and associated materials capture the many varied aspects of life, work and creativity from the early days of screen history to the present day and serve as a rich and invaluable historical resource. [Visit their website.](#)

National Library of Wales Screen and Sound Archive (NLWSSA)

The NSSAW aims to preserve, promote and celebrate the sound and moving image heritage of Wales and is home to a comprehensive and unrivalled collection of films, television programmes, videos, sound and music recordings relating to Wales and the Welsh. Part of the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth, and supported by the Welsh Government, the archive's collection encompasses every aspect of the culture and life of Wales and its people as chronicled by audio-visual media. [Visit their website.](#)

Wessex Film and Sound Archive (WFSA)

Wessex Film and Sound Archive is based at Hampshire Record Office, Winchester. The archive contains over 38,000 film and sound recordings relating to Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, ranging from late Victorian times to the present day, including both amateur and professional material. The collection includes newsreels of local events, military and maritime subjects, amateur footage of life in the region (often not covered by professionals), and research and advertising film produced by local businesses. [Visit their website.](#)

Yorkshire Film Archive (YFA)

The Yorkshire Film Archive collects, preserves, and creates access to moving images made in, or about Yorkshire. Based at York St John

University, their collections are predominantly non-fiction, dating from the 1890s to the present day. They reveal a rich and visually compelling record of all aspects of life, culture, landscape, industry, major events and everyday activities. The collections range from regional TV programmes and news output, through to community film makers, cine club collections, and highly prized amateur and home movie collections – all coming together to create a fascinating visual record of life in the region over the past 120 years.

In 2013 YFA merged with the North East Film Archive, bringing the two collections closer together, sharing specialist facilities and expertise at both locations, and creating a combined total of over 75,000 items reflecting life across the two regions, stretching from just south of Sheffield to north Northumberland and the Scottish border.

North East Film Archive (NEFA)

The North East Film Archive is based at Teesside University, and shares the same charitable remit as YFA – to collect, preserve and create access to its moving image collections. The NEFA collections reflect the people, places, industry, architecture, culture and rich diversity of the North East of England – County Durham, Tyne & Wear, Northumberland and the Tees Valley.

Both YFA and NEFA are wholly committed to providing the widest possible public access to its collections. Hundreds of films are available to watch on the yfa/nefa website free of charge, and the archive team work with communities and exhibitors to deliver community screenings and public engagement programmes throughout the year. [Visit their website.](#)

Additional sources for archive film

This is a list of collections exhibitors have engaged with in recent editions of Changing Times.

- [BBC Archive](#)
- [Bridgeman Images](#)
- [British Council Archive](#)
- [Cinenova](#)
- [Concord Media](#)

- [Imperial War Museum](#)
- [LUX](#)
- [Pathe](#)

Further reading from the Independent Cinema Office

- [Programming Archive](#)
- [An Introductory Guide to Film Projection](#)
- [Tips for supercharging and diversifying your archive film programme](#)

Useful links

- [Film Archives UK](#)
- [International Federation of Film Archives](#)

This document was first published in May 2021. Periodic updates may be issued as required.

Images: Sea/Film - Shifting Sands, Flatpack Festival - Oh Dear Diary, Reel Connections - Sisters of Silents, Glasgow Short Film Festival - First Reels (Ingrid Mur), Telephone operator at work, Margate Film Festival - Margate Time Warp (Stuart Leech), Palace International Film Festival - The Last of England.