



Film History in the Making: Film Historiography, Digitised Archives and Digital Research Dispositifs.

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The dissertation *Film History in the Making: Film Historiography, Digitised Archives and Digital Research Dispositifs* investigates the implications which digitisation bears upon scholarly film historiography. It addresses a deficit in our critical understanding of knowledge production with digital methods and their representational practices in film historical research, attending in particular data visualisations and their uses in GIS mapping, scholarly DVD editions and audiovisual essays. The research project argues that if we do not shed light on the underlying assumptions, procedures and representations of digital scholarship we risk losing our ability to critically navigate in contemporary film historiography and evaluate its results. From this point of departure, the project develops a meta-historical framework which accounts for such practices to further the critical analysis and conceptualisation of digital archive-based scholarship. To this end the dissertation contends that it is necessary to elucidate how film archives, scholarly research traditions and scientific visual analytics condition emerging digital methods and stresses that film historians need to develop strategies for reflecting the humanities' critical, hermeneutical legacy in digital scholarship. The dissertation answers the following research questions:

- How do film heritage institutions, their restoration and preservation deontologies and in particular their digitisation work, condition film historical research with digital techniques and methods?
- How have digital methods travelled from other disciplines into the film historian's toolkit and which disciplinary negotiations do they undergo in this process?
- How may digital tools allow for expressing reflexivity, ambiguity and multiple viewpoints in historical interpretation?

To answer these questions, the dissertation's meta-historical framework draws on theory of history, media theory and visual studies to analyse how visualisations function as symbolisations of historical data in digital research formats. Using the *dispositif* concept to combine theoretical insights from these fields, the dissertation elucidates how digital research formats amalgamate variegated techniques and imply procedural human-machinery interactions to produce graphic

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representations of data, interfaces and inscription devices to think with, analyse and reason from.

The dissertation contains five chapters divided into three parts. Part One, *Sources, Repertories and Theories of Film History* which contains the first two chapters, analyses the interrelation between film archiving and film historiography in a historical perspective. Chapter One, "Film Historiography and Film Archives", discusses the interrelation between historiography and film archiving, its shifting material basis, and the discourses which have underpinned shifting conceptualisations of film and related material as historical source material. It offers an account of how a network of institutions, sites, social groups and techniques – in particular cinephile film critics, historians, archivists, filmmakers, laboratories and projection technologies - emerged and has inflected changing definitions of film historiography in scholarship.

Chapter Two, "Film Heritage Digitisation Between Europeanisation and Cinephile, Curatorial Agendas" discusses digitisation of archival film and related materials in a contemporary European context against the backdrop of especially the European Commission's Digital Agenda. First, the chapter investigates how cultural policies of Europeanisation have shaped cultural heritage digitisation and created fundamental challenges, as well as opportunities, which individual film heritage institutions negotiate in relation to their respective curatorial agendas. Second, the chapter goes beyond the framework of the European Commission to analyse which historical discourses characterise the discussions around film heritage digitisation, restoration and access among film archives. Combining institutional analysis and basic descriptive statistics it investigates in particular how European film heritage institutions' DVD releases reflect historical discourses and condition scholarly research through selection and restoration procedures.

The dissertation's second part, *Data-Driven Mediations of Film History: Traditions, Techniques and Dispositifs*, which contains Chapters Three and Four, analyses a number of case studies to elucidate the methodological steps which scholars take when conceptualising and conducting film historical research with digital tools of analysis. It elucidates how scholarly traditions function as hermeneutic antecedents in digital research projects and inform the choice and methodical uses of digitised source material and techniques to create new research *dispositifs*. Chapter Three, "Microscopic Visions of the Film-Text: Stylometry, Film Philology and DVD editions", analyses how the DVD format has been developed into a philological research *dispositif* at a juncture of quantitative style analysis, scientific visualisation and film philological restoration theory. It considers how video editing, hyperlinking and pattern recognition software in recent projects such as Hyperkino and Digital Formalism, enable the visualisation and comparative study of

micropatterns in cutting rates, movements and colours in archival films. These techniques, the chapter concludes, lend scientificity to the philological study of archival film and play a vital role in conceptualising the DVD as a scholarly research *dispositif*.

Chapter Four “Writing Film History from Below and Seeing it from Above: GIS Mapping and New Cinema History’s Macroscopic Vision” analyses the use of data mining and GIS techniques in New Cinema History research. Attentive to New Cinema History’s primarily contextual focus and use of film related sources, it discusses how information on locations, dates and persons is extracted from digitised collections of periodicals and business documents with data mining techniques to visualise and historicise distribution and exhibition networks with GIS mapping. Analysing New Cinema History’s integration of methodologies from especially *Annales* historiography and historical GIS, the chapter argues that its use of digital mapping creates a cartographic *dispositif* which carefully balances macro- and microperspectives in a “multi-scopic” approach, while reflecting a high degree of ambiguity in its use of data visualisations as evidentiary images.

The dissertation’s final part, *Further Perspectives and Conclusions*, contains a short fifth chapter and conclusion. Chapter 5, “From Figures to Figurations – The Subjective Projections of Cinephilia and Data Art” suggests ways for combining annotation and visualisation techniques at an intersection of scientific and artistic research to nurture idiosyncratic and less methodologically rule-bound data visualisations. The chapter argues that such combinations may foster reflexive approaches which challenge scientific conceptions of visual analytics and statistical figures and give way to an understanding of histories as contingent figurations. The dissertation’s conclusion considers the prospects of integrating and developing digital research methods into film and media studies curricula discussing both conceptual and institutional challenges. As a key point, the conclusion stresses that film historians who engage with digital research *dispositifs* need to become acutely aware that they are not primarily writers of film history but also image makers and observers. As a consequence, scholars need to be able to theorise the variety of visual representations they produce to a greater degree by understanding their underlying discourses, traditions and procedures critically from a meta-historical perspective.