

Submission to the Joint Committee on Publications

Answers to supplementary questions—ScreenSound Australia

1. Your last annual report mentions you have undertaken work with respect to high-risk and at-risk sound recordings and videotapes [pp 16 and 17]. Would you like to expand on that activity for the Committee?

ScreenSound Australia (the National Film and Sound Archive) manages risk to its national collection through a comprehensive risk management program. Through this program the Archive is confident that no items of high heritage value in the National Collection will be lost. Research to date indicates this program is the only one of its size and comprehensiveness worldwide. The following is a synopsis of the program.

The Archive's collection can be divided into the following categories: Film, Sound, Video and Documentation. Within each of these categories are Preservation (the original carrier or the first generation of the original carrier), Duping (a second generation of the original carrier from which further copies are struck for public use, thereby protecting the original) and Access copies (copies for public use).

The presence of risks such as improper storage, materials handling, or not eventually transferring the content, threaten the condition of the physical carrier and, therefore, its intellectual content. In order to maintain the Collection these risk factors need to be eliminated, if possible, or at the very least, have their detrimental effects reduced.

Cyclical maintenance and risk management projects are undertaken in a standardised way (so that any results obtained can be compared with future projects). The methodology used focuses on the assessment of risk posed to the *intellectual content* of the Collection and the risk posed to the *physical carrier* itself.

The table below summarises the findings established during 1998/99 of the levels of risk for the National Collection. The estimated totals represent the combination of Nominal and Probable assessments, while the "Definitely Low Risk" and "Definitely High Risk" figures are shown separately. The next assessment of the risk to the National Collection is scheduled for the end of 1999/2000.

Risk Assessment Summary Table

	Film		Sound		Video	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Definitely High Risk	2,656	2.7	1,034	1.4	33	0.2
Definitely Low Risk	0	0	7,172	9.8	0	0
Estimate High Risk	4,910	4.9	8,293	11.4	10,630	66.8
Estimate Low Risk	92,334	92.4	56,434	77.4	5,246	33
Total	99,900	100	72,933	100	15,909	100

To manage the risks identified ScreenSound has highly sophisticated laboratory facilities that allow us to repair, copy, renew, or treat all forms of audiovisual carriers. Using these facilities we copy anywhere between 250,000 and 500,000 feet of film per year, over 1000 sound recordings per year and over 3000 videos per year. We copy about 1000 films to video, and repair or examine over 2 million feet of film per year.

2. Would you outline the role of national service centres and how you intend to be more innovative in your delivery systems?

ScreenSound Australia's national collection of Screen and Sound is available via our online catalogue on the ScreenSound website www.screensound.gov.au. It is a text database listing over 360,000 items and spanning 100 years of Australia's film, television, radio and recorded sound heritage. The online catalogue provides all web users with access to ScreenSound Australia's catalogue, and users can submit a request for service, copying, information or loan, directly to one of ScreenSound's offices.

In addition to ScreenSound offices in Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne, access facilities are also available at the following locations:

ACCESS CENTRES

- ADELAIDE: State Library of South Australia, North Terrace, Adelaide, S.A. 5000. Tel: (08) 8207 7330 Fax: (08) 8207 7351
 - BRISBANE: Audiovisual Unit, State Library of Queensland, Queensland Cultural Centre, Southbank, South Brisbane, QLD, 4101. Tel: (07) 3840 7830 Fax: (07) 3840 7840
 - HOBART: State Library of Tasmania, Heritage Collections, 2nd Floor, 91 Murray Street, Hobart, TAS, 7000. Tel: (03) 6233 7498 Fax: (03) 6233 7902
- PERTH: State Film & Video Library, Mezzanine Floor, Alexander Library Building, Perth, WA, 6000. Tel: (08) 9427 3159 Fax: (08) 9427 3256

The Access Centres provide auditioning, preview and research facilities for people living, or working, in each of the Australian states. Plans are underway to establish an Access Centre in Darwin.

Additionally, pending copyright clearance, research material may be sent to remote locations for auditioning or viewing.

New initiatives in delivery systems include digitising photographic stills (from ScreenSound's documentation collection) and making them available via the web site. Currently 5,500 photographic stills are available for viewing via ScreenSound's online catalogue and new images continue to be added. ScreenSound is continuing to develop new delivery systems such as online preview facilities for image and sound material.

ScreenSound has recently entered into a trial arrangement with Imagination Entertainment, an Adelaide based company, to include ScreenSound material in a footage-online media library. Imagination Entertainment makes ScreenSound material available for licensing via the Footage Online web site www.footageonline.com

ScreenSound Australia is also participating in the TransACT broadband communication trial. TransACT Communications has grown from a project which ACTEW Corporation (the energy and water utility in the Australian Capital Territory) began investigating in 1995. The project undertook a trial network installation in the Canberra suburb of Aranda during 1998 and 1999. ScreenSound Australia provided collection material to be broadcast as part of the trial. On completion, the broadband digital network will support telephony, video and high speed data services to residential, business and government markets.

Our website, which was rewarded as a finalist at the prestigious 1999 AFR/Telstra awards, will be a major vehicle for other innovative delivery systems. Planning is in progress to develop the capability to deliver content online. Audio and still images most practically lend themselves to online delivery because they consume comparatively small amounts of bandwidth to deliver. The amount of bandwidth currently available in Australia presents a major barrier to the delivery of large amounts of video content online.

A further significant challenge for ScreenSound Australia relating to the delivery of content online is the management of intellectual and moral property rights. ScreenSound Australia will be developing models for managing intellectual property responsibilities and entitlements. Consultation will take place with industry representatives and collection stakeholders as part of developing a management system for future online content delivery.

ScreenSound also has a product program under which it publishes videos and audio CDs. These are re-issues of otherwise unavailable archival materials or compilations of material from our Collection. The product range has about 130 titles, is distributed through over 700 outlets Australia wide and is available by mail order.

3. *The annual reports also states that a 'long-term project has commenced to assess and upgrade existing data for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander holdings' [p.8]. Is it intended that this will assist access to the material by, for example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in remote locations?*

- *Will you briefly explain how people would know that such material exists at all?*
- *How would people in a remote location organise a viewing if they wished to do so?*

The Archive's Indigenous Project consists of four components.

The first is to obtain expert advice on the management and handling of the relevant material. To this end an Indigenous Reference Group has been established as a sub committee of our Council. This Group is providing advice on all aspects of the Collection including its future use and promotion.

The second arm of our program is to properly identify all the relevant materials in our Collection. This includes marking materials with appropriate restrictions where necessary and ensuring that all materials are properly identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander holdings. Not all of the records of this material will be available on our public database accessible through our website, on the basis that some of the data about the material is in itself sensitive and needs to remain restricted. On the other hand this Project will ensure that most of the material in our Collection can at least be researched at the meta data level through our website.

The third arm of our Project will be to disseminate information about our Indigenous holdings to relevant groups and individuals. This will be through the use of a conventional paper-based catalogue, our Internet catalogue, publicity in relevant forums and publications, and direct contact with relevant individuals and groups. We do not anticipate that this Project will be underway for at least another 12 months because of the size of the task of properly ensuring that the Indigenous material is both identified and that any restrictions on access are properly recorded.

The fourth arm of the Project will involve more active participation in the use of the material. We have already undertaken one such enterprise through the publication of two videos, entitled the "*The Dreaming Reels*" Volumes 1 and 2, in the context of the *Festival of the Dreaming* in the leadup to the Sydney Olympics. This represents action that the Archive is taking on its own initiative to find appropriate means for making the relevant parts of our Collection more readily available and more widely used. Other video products, and later CD or DVD based materials could be produced. Equally we may be able to find opportunities to actively promote the use of our Collection in the context of other research and exhibition programs. In the utilisation of other parts of our Collection we have been able to identify exhibitions, publications, and projects that could make suitable use of our Collection and target promotion of our Collection to those projects. We believe there will be scope to undertake a similar program in relation to Indigenous material. I must emphasise however that this fourth arm of the Project can be anticipated to be at least one to two years away.

As a general comment I would note that this part of our Collection is by far the most difficult to manage and utilise. Not only are there more complex cultural sensitivities, with less expertise within the Archive in managing those sensitivities, but a much higher percentage of potential users live in remote locations, and there is a much lower prevalence of video, audio and computing facilities in many of the communities for whom this material would be particularly relevant. As a result the development of suitable access strategies will require

extensive consultation with expertise outside the Archive. It is for this reason that the Project is a long term enterprise.

4. *In terms of general access to your holdings, would you give us an idea of whether the demand is increasing, and whether you have done any benchmarking with organisations similar to your own?*

Access requests to ScreenSound Australia's collection continue to increase each year. Year-to-date enquiries are as follows:

	YTD Enquiries
1999/00	4,457
1998/99	3,579
1997/98	3,629
1996/97	2,969

ScreenSound Australia meets with other cultural heritage organisations which provide reference enquiry services. Opportunities for benchmarking and to discuss services, fees and trends arise through the following inter-organisational meetings:

- *Commonwealth Collecting Institutions* meetings — participants include ScreenSound Australia, National Archives of Australia, Australian War Memorial, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, National Library of Australia, National Gallery of Australia and National Museum.
- *Screen Network Information Providers* meetings — participants include ScreenSound Australia, Australian Film Commission, Australian Film Institute, Australian Film, Television and Radio School, Australian Broadcasting Authority.

5. Would you provide details of any collaborative arrangements you have in place to avoid duplication of effort at the federal level (or State) level with respect to preservation of material.

ScreenSound Australia does not have any equivalents at State or Territory level, especially in relation to the preservation of audiovisual materials. However, it is recognised that a large range of audiovisual material is held by other Federal and State based bodies, particularly cultural organisations. This audiovisual material is recognised in a concept of a 'Distributed National Collection'.

To support this collection, ScreenSound Australia seeks to take a leadership role in respect of the archival management of the collection including preservation responsibilities.

ScreenSound Australia's support services include: specialist scientific archival and policy advice, website based information, education seminars, participation in conferences and industry forums and the provisions of specialist consultancies (often on a fees-for-service or exchange of benefit basis).

ScreenSound Australia also undertakes preservation copying work on behalf of colleague institutions such as the Australian War Memorial, the National Gallery of Australia, the Antarctic Division and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

6. One of the Committee's concerns is the preservation of material authored by federal government and parliamentary sources. Would you comment on your policy in relation to migration and upkeep of older technology equipment (such as the wide tape machine which the Committee saw at Acton?).

ScreenSound Australia maintains its obsolete technology copying capability by maintaining original equipment to enable playing of original formats so that transfers of content to new formats can be undertaken. It also maintains the technical practitioner and format research programs to support operation of this equipment.

The maintenance of various generations of playback equipment is essential to support content migration strategies (such as the 2" video machine you refer to). As an example we run over a dozen video formats, an equal number of audio formats and nearly that many film formats. As described earlier, timely copying of content is an inherent feature of the management of risk to the national collection, as well as facilitating access to the collection material.