

THE BRAZILIAN ASSOCIATION OF AUDIOVISUAL PRESERVATION (ABPA)

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INTRODUCTION

The Brazilian Association of Audiovisual Preservation - Associação Brasileira de Preservação Audiovisual (ABPA), in Portuguese - was created on June 16th of 2008 by those who attended the National Meeting of Moving Image Archives, hosted by the third Ouro Preto Film Festival, casually known as CineOP in Brazil. The ABPA now has more than 200 members, from a wide array of people connected to Brazilian audiovisual preservation: researchers, technicians, students and professionals.

The ABPA is a nonprofit association that has among its members professionals who work for private and public institutions and also independents. During the National Meeting of Moving Image Archive, the ABPA hosts its yearly event, where its members can get together.

Among the main goals are: the enhancement of the activity in the country, the professional recognition of those who dedicate their lives and work to it; and a broader reflection regarding the Brazilian audiovisual heritage.

Its e-mail group serves as an important place to discuss topics related to audiovisual preservation. In it, we found members from all parts of the country and even from Argentina, Chile, Peru, Uruguay, among other countries. The ABPA does not intend to be an informal group, so one early step was to create a legal identity and in this moment we are providing ways so that its members can formally join the Association.

According to recent surveys, around 50 institutions in the 27 states of Brazil have audiovisual collections. Together, they have over 70 thousand film titles and more than 3 millions non-film items. These institutions have different styles and different kinds of materials. Most of them answer to the Federal Government and their budget comes from public funds. They range from very big archives, like the Cinemateca Brasileira, in São Paulo, biggest and oldest Brazilian audiovisual archive, created in 1946 and now a branch from the Ministry of Culture, and the Cinemateca do Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro (Rio de Janeiro's Museum of Modern Art Film Archive), a private institution

created in 1955, both affiliates of FIAF, to museums, University archives, television archives, private collections, among others.

It is important here to highlight the fact that although Brazil is part of Latin America, there are some peculiarities regarding the historical and cultural background of the country that differentiate it from a general Latin American context. With that in mind, I would like to point out that what I will present here refers only to aspects of the audiovisual preservation in Brazil.

A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

During the Late nineties and early two thousand a transformation in the Brazilian audiovisual preservation scene began, a process in which the field and its professionals became more mature. These changes become evident in some factors such as: the increasing number of national films restored; a recommendation to include audiovisual preservation as a mandatory class in the Film undergraduate programs; and consequently a noticeable growth on the number of papers written on the topic.

With the beginning of the 21st century audiovisual preservation began to be considered one of the fundamental steps in the life of a film. Therefore, the whole film community started to pay attention to film preservation activities. Even if it happens very gradually, a process of change in the mentality and of growing awareness of the importance of the preservation is already taking place.

Those who work in this field not only start to notice that they exist as a group (even if this brings many internal arguments), but also begin to understand the need of a political backing in order to achieve advances for the area.

One first step in this direction was the final document produced at the third Brazilian Congress of Cinema - Congresso Brasileiro de Cinema (CBC) - in 2000. Among the 69 resolutions brought by this paper, we have some regarding audiovisual preservation. The following demands were listed: a survey of all the Brazilian film archives; creation of a specific fund for preservation and the inclusion of preservation in the curriculum of film schools. The CBC, an association of entities, gathered in that year more than 31 organizations coming from 9 different states (out of 27), beside various attendees who had no right to vote in the assembly.

Since then, the perception and the advocacy for the preservation as a constituent of the chain of film production is growing stronger. One of the demands came to life in 2006 when the Resolution number 10/2006 of the National Council of Education - Conselho

Nacional de Educação was passed - that call for the inclusion of film preservation among the disciplines of the film schools. During the 7th CBC, in 2007, the audiovisual community was expressly asked to include preservation at the end of the film cycle - made of production, distribution, exhibition and preservation - in all publications and pronouncements.

The launching in 2000 of a course called "Preservation and Restoration and Politics of Audiovisual Archives" in one of the most traditional film schools of the country, the Universidade Federal Fluminense, in the metropolitan area of Rio de Janeiro, was essential to start making the students aware of the importance of this field. It was the first time that a Film Studies program included a subject devoted to film preservation in Brazil. Some scholars say that it was the first time in South America but we couldn't find reliable information on this matter.

This class was first introduced as an elective subject but soon became mandatory by pressure of the students. A big part of the Brazilian professionals now working in this field are graduates who took this class that promoted the interest of many film students in the subject, some working on institutions or freelancing for some projects and other engaging in academic research.

Since then, we witnessed a considerable growth in the numbers of graduation papers, Master and PhD thesis being written on the subject not only in film courses but also in other areas, such as Museology, Archival science, information science, among others.

During the first years of this century we also can trace an ever-growing number of new released films that make a remarkable use of archival images. The number of Brazilian films that underwent restoration also increased, especially titles directed by filmmakers linked to the Cinema Novo movement, such as Glauber Rocha, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade and Leon Hirszman. It is important to point out that the circulation of these works, in theaters and home video had a major relevance: it made explicit the financial impact of the preservation in Brazil, something practically not noticed until then.

Regarding the organization of the field, a key element was the establishment of a yearly meeting, during the Ouro Preto Film Festival, created in 2006. In this festival the main goal is to celebrate the audiovisual heritage. Since then, the CineOP, as is called in Brazil, became a major point of discussion and reflection on actions involving film preservation and its decisions are heard by the broader film community in Brazil. One very sensitive question arises here: The Association became dependent on an event held by a private organization.

Even if the dialogue with the State authority has improved, it is still limited. During these last few years the vast majority of the investments on audiovisual preservation were concentrated in only one archive: The Cinemateca Brasileira, providing a huge instability in the sector.

Considering the fact that the Ministry of Culture under President Lula (from 2003 to 2010) invested in a decentralization of culture, the concentration of funds in only one institution proved to be very inconsistent. Unfortunately the strengthening of the Cinemateca Brasileira went in detriment of a National Audiovisual Preservation Policy.

In an area where almost nothing had ever happened, a lot was done, but in this "lot" many contradictions are found. We can notice several examples of incongruity and inconsistencies in the cultural policies and we know that the situation described is not unique in any way.

But it is surprising that specially in the audiovisual preservation field, the current balance of power made way to a self-centered policy and to actions that were very focused in only one archive. These actions were not just simply filled with contradictions to the concepts that served as guide to strategies and actions in other areas of the Ministry; but they were at opposite ends.

This situation has been changing in these last two years. Since then the dialogue was resumed with the Audiovisual Agency of the Ministry of Culture, responsible for the funding of preservation activities.

The first two years of the ABPA were marked by internal debates and discussion regarding its profiles and duties. This scenario proved to be a hurdle in approving a bylaw for the entity. Would ABPA take shape as a political forum or as an institution in which only technical matters should be discussed? An association of individuals or of institutions? Who would be its members? Just the "audiovisual archivists" could join or professionals of related areas would be welcome? In order to become a member of ABPA, said person would need to be in charge of an archive? What kind of archive? The Executive Committee elected for the 2010/11 term had as its main duty the creation of a bylaw and after its approval, the election of the first Board of directors could be held. Only after that, the ABPA could also be a legal institution.

The proposal was only approved in the next year, and that made it possible to the first Board of Directors to be elected. In 2013, the ABPA became a Legal Entity and launched its first publication, the Brazilian version of Ray Edmonson's book, "Audiovisual

Archiving: Philosophy, Principles and Ethics". Right now we are in a phase to elaborate and implement a way in which its members could formally affiliate to ABPA and also define and implement a Code of Ethics.

The area needs to advance in its process of organization, overcome differences and act together so that the audiovisual preservation, a profoundly cross-functional area can be recognized as a relevant subject in its several fields: audiovisual, heritage, education, archival studies, communication, economy, Law, science and technology, among others. It would also be fundamental to strengthen the process of institutionalization of the audiovisual preservation as a specific area with its own necessities and requirements.

Because of all that, a dialogue between the cultural policies and the audiovisual policies needs to be established in Brazil. The invisibility of audiovisual heritage in the discussions regarding cultural heritage lead by IPHAN (The National Historic and Artistic Heritage Institute - Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional), allowed the development of two autonomous areas operating with different approaches, key concepts and work methodologies. No need to say, there has not been any kind of dialogue so far.

POLITICAL ISSUES

What we notice in the federal actions regarding the audiovisual preservation is something that could be easily applied to several public policies in Brazil: The creation of unstable institutional plans, usually led by strong-willed individuals that have a decisive influence on the design of the Governmental actions, that are momentary solutions to specific problems.

During the nineties, the reduction of the number of government employees in the cultural area promoted the practice of outsourcing in the archives. This characteristic remains to this day the most common. With a weaker work relation, the loss of a qualified workforce, trained by the archive, is constant. So the institution ends up periodically training new people to perform its day-do-day activities.

Nonetheless, a better educational and professional training, the debates that arose and some political connections allowed for a significant growth of the area . But we still face many big challenges: archives vaults with precarious infrastructure, the impossibility of maintaining a stable staff working in the archive for a long period of time; and the chronic lack of resources are still part of the everyday reality in the majority of the Brazilian audiovisual archives.

The creation of the ABPA brought to surface the necessity of a national policy that acts as a decentralized force to the area of audiovisual preservation. The definition of a National Plan for Preserving the Brazilian Audiovisual Heritage is urgent. It must be created and implemented as a joint action between the public powers and the civil society.

The consolidation of audiovisual preservation in Brazil needs to be faced as a part in the process of an institutional empowerment of culture: the sector can not depend on the sensibility of some individuals; the policies can not depend on friendships or personal fondness; it must be some decisive level of action that does not depend on temporary managers.

After years of experience we know what we need. It is time to reinforce a national articulation, in which we, all professionals who worked in the area of audiovisual preservation can help each other; to define priorities, strategies, aim and action; to search partnerships with public and private powers, both at federal, state and municipal levels; to gather funds to implement an effective national policy for audiovisual preservation. This is the role of ABPA.

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