Collecting Guidelines – Film Collection, Memorial Library

Memorial Library actively maintains a film collection whose primary purpose is to support the teaching and research needs of the Berry College community. An important secondary purpose of the collection, for a residential community such as ours, is to provide diverse cultural opportunities and recreational outlets for our patrons. For all aspects of the film and television collection, selection is a collaborative process, led by the Fine Arts liaison/film collection coordinator with input encouraged from students, staff, faculty, and librarians.

The collection is broadly constructed according to the following four categories:

1) Curricular Support – Collecting priorities for this facet of the collection are driven primarily by programmatic need and curricular relevance. Materials may come from any category of film – feature, documentary, educational programming – and may be chosen to support any pertinent area of study. Documentaries represent a notable subcategory often acquired as curricular support, but noteworthy documentaries may also be selected for the collection writ large. Selectors will periodically review documentary films garnering critical attention from juried venues like the Sundance, Toronto, Chicago, and London Film Festivals or from recognized sources for film criticism like Film Comment and Sight and Sound, among others.

2) Historical Relevancy – A core goal of the collection is to provide a broad representation of the history of cinema and television. To this end, the library maintains a compilation of all films ranked in the AFI’s celebrated list, “100 Years…100 Films,” as well as additional support from the BFI’s equally well-regarded list of “50 Greatest Films of All Time.” Such films are marked by their rich cultural, intellectual, and artistic contributions to the medium. Television history is similarly represented but, at the moment, lacks some of the depth of the cinematic collection. There are a number of worthwhile and informative sources for television history that might be utilized as collection building aids, including the Archives of American Television and the Writers’ Guild of America. While no overt attempt is made to emphasize the technical advances of film science or the craft of film production, per se, formative examples and developments in these areas are readily evinced in the current collection.

3) World Cinema – Recognizing the array of contributions from filmmakers around the globe, Memorial Library maintains holdings of international films in a variety of languages. Among our holdings are award-winning and popular films, intended not only to support the curriculum, but also to introduce students to filmmakers and subjects they might not ordinarily encounter. The collection is particularly strong in French, German, and Spanish cinema, but also incorporates films from across Eastern and Western Europe,
East Asia, and South America. In consequence, our foreign language collection provides supportive opportunities for language learning, immersion, and exposure.

4) Feature Films & Television – While budget and space preclude any sort of comprehensive feature film collection, Memorial Library strives to provide a well-chosen sample of contemporary films and television series that serve the cultural and recreational needs of our community. Such films may be chosen for their cinematic, artistic, and/or critical value or for their relevance as representatives of contemporary popular culture. In order to sustain a core collection, Memorial Library acquires annually the winners of AFI’s juried awards for both outstanding film and television series.* When budgetary restrictions allow, additional selections of feature films and television are made. Such selections should strive to meet a combination of the following criteria…

- Critical recognition or acclaim
- Major award winner
- Critical reputation of the creator – director, writer, producer, etc.
- Cultural or historical significance
- Significance as a popular culture phenomenon
- Regional setting or local significance
- Literary or theatrical adaptation

* Successful television series may air for several seasons and, therefore, form a particular challenge to systematic collection building. Much of the problem hinges on how to define the “work” as a unit – an episode, a season, or a complete series. For programs based on stand-alone episodes, in which the narrative connectivity between episodes is minimal (the classic sitcom, for instance), it is arguably possible – and perhaps preferable – to include representative season(s) without feeling undue necessity to collect the entirety of the program’s run. In contrast, for serial television, in which the plot and narrative arch of the series is continuous, unfolding, and linked, it is arguably preferable to collect the entirety of the program’s run in order to maintain the full story-telling integrity of the series. The ready analogy in this instance would be to a triple decker novel or other literary cycle, where one would seek to collect the entirety of the work, rather than individual volumes.
Addendum – Streaming Video – 6/15

The streaming video collection supported by Memorial Library should conform to the same general categories and sub-categories created for the broader film collection (as detailed above). In its current guise, the streaming video collection is practically oriented towards curricular support in the form of documentary and educational films, but future possibilities to stream feature films should not be excluded from consideration. At this moment, streaming content comes from a variety of sources including external providers and an in-house hosting system. Over the next few years, it is anticipated that the means of provision for streaming video will continue to change and evolve, but the criteria for content selection should hold stable for the time being.