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Film Canons and the Academic Library

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Abstract

In 2005 it was suggested within a *New York Times* article that perhaps a university level qualification in film studies could be considered “the new MBA” given the moving image’s extraordinary capacity for communicating messages on a global scale (Van Ness, 2005). The increasingly prominent position of films in the academic library from the early ‘90s onwards has popularly been attributed to the rise of film studies in universities along with advances in home video technology. Such developments have facilitated the holding of open access DVD and VHS collections of popular films in the academic library. However the growth of popular film collections has been contemporaneous with an increasing focus on postmodern theory and cultural studies in film studies and the decline of the practice of evaluation from academic film study. In this environment film canons compiled and endorsed by film academics have disappeared to be replaced by a proliferation of “best of” lists compiled by popular magazines and websites. This thesis analyses the film collections of seven Irish university libraries in order to determine whether or not film canons do continue to play a role in their formation and development.

Introduction and Methodology

The canon can simply be described as the body of works that is considered to be the most important or significant in a particular field. (Karras, 2006, p.121)

In his 2006 article on the subject of film canons, Paul Schrader traces the history of the secular art canon. According to Schrader the term canon has evolved from the Latin term *canon*, which means an ecclesiastical “standard of judgement” that is achieved by those books that are included in the Bible (Schrader, 2006, p.37). With the emergence of art criticism as a legitimate academic discipline in the Victorian era there surfaced a popular desire to define “the best which has been thought and said in the world” (ctd. in Schrader, 2006, p.37). The term “canon” was first appropriated by American and English literary critics and academics at the beginning of the twentieth century to define the best and greatest works according to rigorous aesthetic criteria. The purpose of such analyses was primarily to create guides to the greatest literary works. It was on the basis of such lists that the term “canon” slipped into popular consciousness as a byword for “must read” or “essential” (p.38). Romantic film theorists such as Andrew Sarris took up the mantle in the middle part of the twentieth century by subjecting popular films to a similar rigorous analysis and publishing their analyses as definitive guides to the “greatest” films (Sarris, 1968). However, Schrader has noted that by this point the definitive assumptions of art criticism that had defined the discipline in the previous century had already been shattered by various technological, political and theoretical developments in Western culture (p.38).

For example film studies, like many other disciplines of the Arts, was permeated by postmodern theory during the latter part of the twentieth century. The dominance of postmodern theory has made it difficult to assert with any conviction what sort of materials should be included in an academic library’s film collection outside of those materials explicitly required for course work. This also makes it difficult to evaluate the quality of existing collections. It has been observed that a consequence of such theoretical developments is that since the 1980s the discipline of film studies has embraced a pluralist approach with an increasing focus on cultural studies and reception analysis (Dyki, 2002, p.202). This broadening of the methodological approach has been met by a significant expansion of the subjects deemed worthy of analysis. This has been attributed to the fact that the discipline has come to be underpinned by “structuralist literary theory, structuralist semiotics, variants of Althusserian Marxism and Lacanian psychoanalysis” (ibid), often taking its leave from the work of authors such as “Roman Jakobson, Claude Levi-Straus and Roland

Barthes" (ibid) and thereby muddying the criteria that a collection manager might use to evaluate the quality of a film collection.

Yet, as Wexman asked back in 1986, is not the selection of films for study in the curriculum in and of itself an evaluative activity? Why do academics choose to study certain films rather than others and how does one explain the homogeneity amongst required viewing lists in film studies courses at third level institutions (Wexman, 1986, p.33)? While film studies has moved beyond a singular idea of what constitutes quality or "goodness" (the ubiquity of both the critically lauded *Citizen Kane* and the critically derided *I Spit on Your Grave* in Irish university libraries is striking), it is clear from the homogeneity in Irish academic libraries' multimedia collections that libraries are not necessarily adhering to a postmodern, egalitarian, anti-canonist ideal either. Against this backdrop one might ask what is the role of the film canon in the academic library?

It is significant that the source cited at the top of this introduction does not use the term "best" in its definition of the canon for, in the Humanities, the idea that one can articulate a singular concept for what can be considered the "best" information is surely impossible. As Quinn states, "the notion of a universally valid set of aesthetic criteria is not possible because aesthetics are ultimately based on social consensus" (Quinn, 1994, p.7). Yet the revival of the literary canon debate by Harold Bloom in 1994 was primarily an evaluative endeavour and a reaction against what he felt was the excessive and destructive relativism of postmodernist literary scholarship on academic literary criticism. Since then the role of the canon in the literature section of the academic library has been interrogated on several occasions from a variety of perspectives (Buchsbaum, 2009; Collins, 2000; Conteh-Morgan, 2003; Doherty, 1998; Quinn, 1996). However, analysis of the role of the film canon in the library remains underdeveloped even as debate surrounding the concept of the film canon itself has accrued more interest in film criticism in recent years.

It is against this backdrop that the central research question of this thesis is posed:

Is there evidence to support the supposition that Irish university libraries develop and perpetuate film canons in the development of their film collections?

In the literature related to the activity of library collection management one tends to find a general agreement on the idea that one of the primary responsibilities of a library's collection is to meet the information needs of its users (Agee, 2007, p.1; Clayton and Gorman, 2006, p.xii; Prytherch, 2000, p.163). In the academic arena the meeting of the

information need is likely to be manifested in collections' support of teaching with the materials that students require for their coursework (Loneragan, 2009, p.191). With this in mind, Oksana Dyki's comments on academic libraries' film collections are instructive. She writes that

...academic cinema collections are not composed of classics exclusively and nor should a core collection be...The scholarly study of film has, in fact, taken research and teaching far beyond the mainstream into more fringe areas, such as pornography, cult films and ultra-violent films. In this environment films such as *Behind the Green Door* and *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* have become part of a new canon for feminist film studies and other areas of inquiry (Dyki, 2002, p.216).

What one might infer from this information is that although canons might endure they are not singular, definitive entities and are not necessarily explicitly evaluative. Dyki suggests that popular film collections can also be significant cultural artefacts, representative of a broader mass culture, and defines "cinema", in the broadest sense of the term, as being "clearly the depiction of modern culture and within a contemporary academic context it has become one of the strongest elements of cultural studies" (Dyki, 2002, p.200). The very real implication of such a perception is that collections serve not only film and media courses but a wide array of cultural studies and social science curricula. Consequently the potential educational functions of a film collection are variegated, as Walters has noted:

The assumption underlying the acquisition of popular films and other dramatic works is that they are educationally valuable in several ways: as aids to our understanding of literature and drama, as examples of the performing arts, as guides to rhetorical styles and devices, and as indicators of historical and cultural conditions" (Walters, 2003, p.162)

This widening of the pedagogical net prompts our second research question:

How does the information specialist define what constitutes the "most important" documents of information in the context of film collection management?

The pluralisation of film studies is perhaps exacerbated by the shifting nature of film distribution in the web era. We are now living in what has been described as the era of the "Long Tail", an age where consumer choice appears infinite, breaking free of the constraints of the pre-Web era. The central thesis of Anderson's 2004 article, 'The Long Tail', is that the technology that has prompted the digital explosion has drastically altered the economics of

popular culture, shifting markets in this area from a reliance on hits towards being driven by collections of “niches” (Anderson, 2004). The term, “long tail”, refers to the long tail that is visible on a graph when cumulative niche demand equals or exceeds demand for the most popular products (fig. A [James, 2008]).

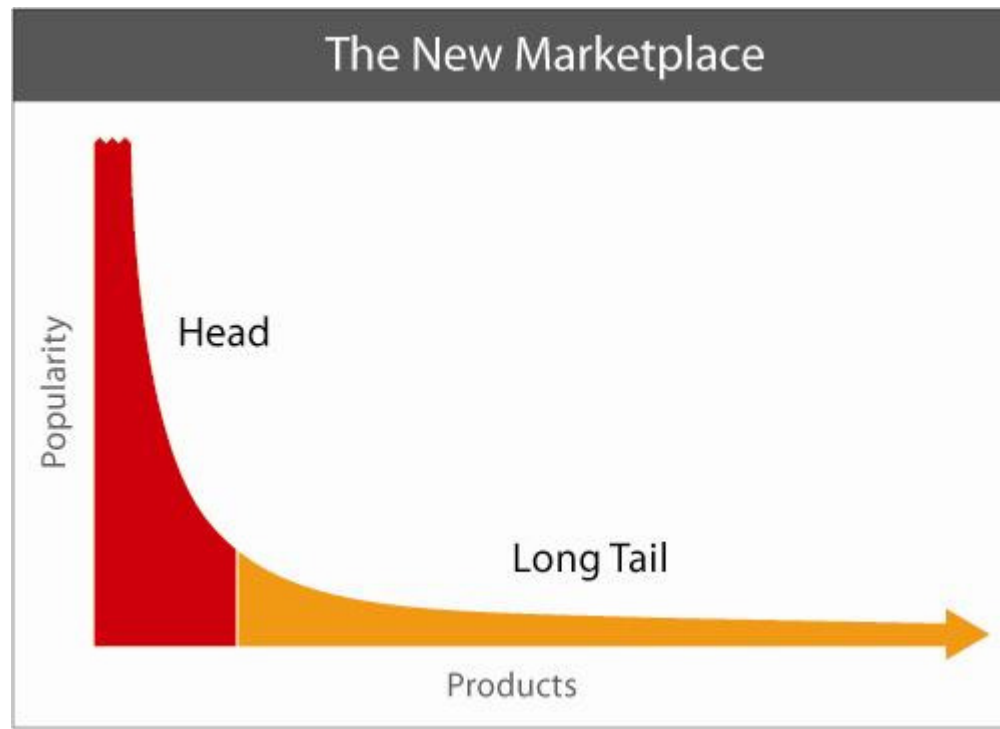


Fig. A

Anderson recognised that online retailers and digital media service providers (exemplified by companies such as Amazon.co.uk, Netflix and iTunes) did not encounter the same limitations of shelf and storage space as traditional retailers and were therefore free to offer far wider selections of books, films and music than customers would have been traditionally accustomed to. He also discovered that, cumulatively, collections of niche titles tended to account for as much, if not a greater share, of such companies’ sales or rentals. The implication for collection managers is that, along with the widening of the pedagogical net, the amount of information available has multiplied. In this environment has the purpose of the canon shifted from being primarily a means of evaluation to becoming a classification tool? This is not an original argument as canons have previously been suggested as a selection resource for collection managers of interdisciplinary collections (Alsop, 2007, p.584; O’English et al., 2006, p.177). This brings us to our third research question:

How does one define the purpose of the canon within the context of video collection management?

Defining the canon

In this thesis the notion of the canon will be analysed from both a collection management and a film studies perspective. However, it is first necessary to define a conceptual knowledge model to explain how canons are formed in academia. In his 2006 article *Canons, cultural memory and positive knowledge in humanities education*, Alan Karass presents a new model for mapping knowledge and information concepts such as canons that provides a very useful template for this project. Karass defines several related knowledge concepts and coins the term “knowledge migration” to describe how knowledge moves between its various stages. The diagram (Karass, 2007, p.122) below offers an attempt to illustrate the various states of knowledge and information as defined by Karass and to describe how knowledge and information travels through these states.

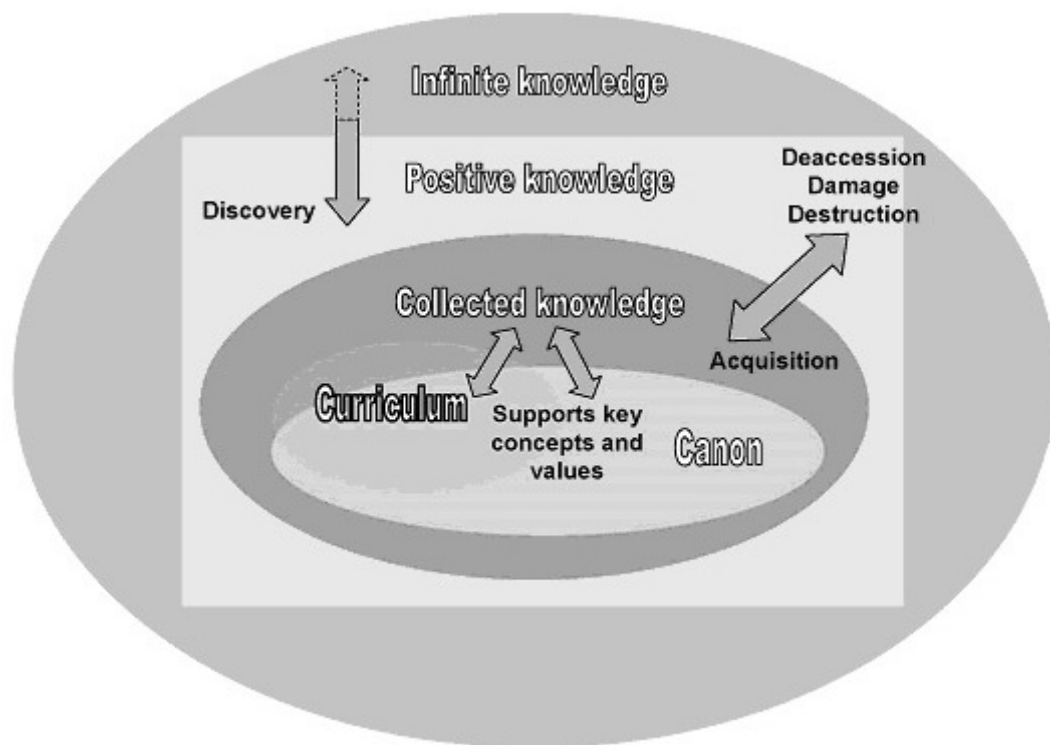


Fig. B

The first term introduced by Karass is “infinite knowledge” which represents all knowledge and information in existence, both known and unknown. One might alternatively describe the concept as representing both existing and potential knowledge. Infinite knowledge is “all that is known and documented as well as all that exists but is unknown to mankind” (Karass, 2006, p.120). Positive knowledge is “all knowledge that is known to exist”

(ibid). Evidently, knowledge moves from infinite knowledge to positive knowledge through discovery. Collected knowledge is the material within or accessible via a collection that is acquired from all documented positive knowledge which, in the Humanities, includes “all extant literature, fine arts, artifacts (sic), music and books” (p.121). Collected knowledge produces cultural memory, providing physical “enduring artefacts that preserve and document the history, ideas and values of the culture in which they were produced” (ibid). This knowledge provides the basis for contemporary education. Canons are therefore the collections of documents that are “considered to be” the most important in a particular field or discipline. Karass is quick to point out that canons are not, and should not be considered, definitive and they may be imbued with particular ideological or aesthetic values. The curriculum refers to those knowledge topics taught within an academic discipline. Although curricula tend to focus on the canon they will also look outside the canon. “Although works outside the canon can be included in the curriculum, works within the canon most easily demonstrate the major concepts essential to the curriculum” (p.122).

One of the central theses of Karass’s article is that at some point works within the canon and the curriculum would have been classified within one of the broader knowledge categories. Another premise of the model is that there is a wealth of existing and potential knowledge that could be added to the canon, just as those works that currently comprise the canon could fall back into one of the wider groups. To quote the author again, “What is important for understanding knowledge migration is acknowledging that works can move in and out of the canon and the catalysts are more complex than they appear” (p.123). These catalysts are the criteria (these may be ideological, aesthetic, political, cultural etc.) that determine the makeup of canons. Consequently information professionals, in this case media librarians, need to be capable of interpreting information and have a deep knowledge of their discipline. Theoretically canons should constantly be “in flux” (Buschsbaum, 2009, p.5) with information migrating between categories.

Yet it is significant that this model does not define what constitutes importance. The implication is that importance is relative to the collection, the university, the academic and the student. For the purposes of this thesis, importance is based on two factors. Firstly, importance will be implied by consensus. Secondly, consensus will be supported by critical recognition. Simply put, the recurrence of items across library catalogues might be interpreted as evidence of a canon if supported by evidence of a wider critical recognition of the work.

Research Methods and Methodology

Research Philosophy

The research conducted within this thesis was underlined by a positivist research philosophy. According to Williamson, “positivist research is based mainly on deductive styles of reasoning” (Williamson, 2002, p.28). Having originated as an analysis of the role of niche film materials in the video collections of academic libraries, upon further research the project developed into an analysis of the role of film canons in collection management. From this point onwards the research began to focus on an interrogation of the hypothesis that film canons both contributed to and were perpetuated by video collections held in the academic library.

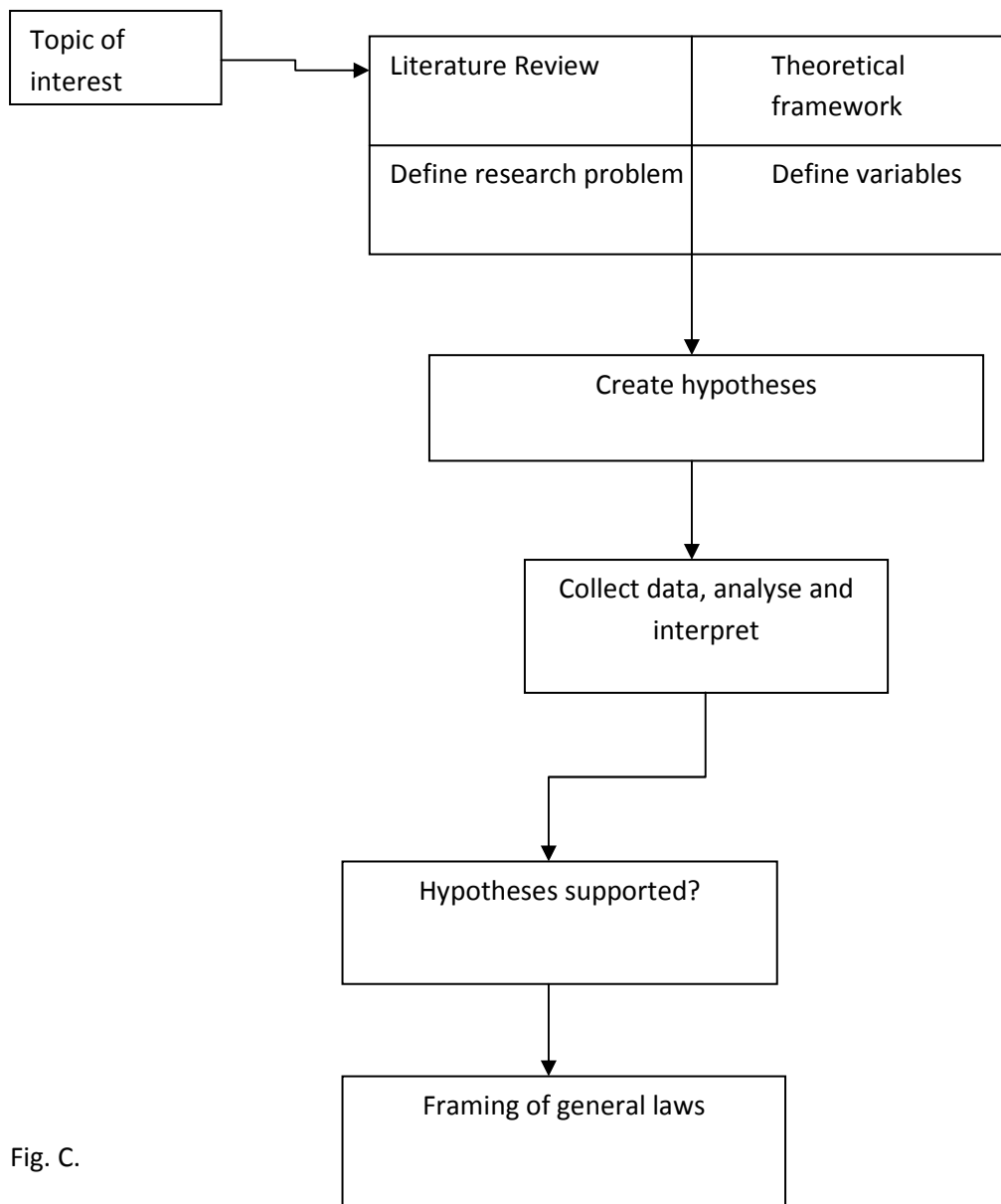


Fig. C.

The diagram above (Williamson, 2002, p.29) illustrates the conventional positivist research process whereby the literature review directly contributes to the creation of the hypothesis (Primary Research Question - **Is there evidence to support the supposition that Irish university libraries develop and perpetuate film canons in the development of their film collections?**). This was the model for this particular thesis. On the basis of this preliminary, secondary research a definitive aim was established (to see if the hypothesis could be supported). This prompted the development of a set of methods that were employed to collect and analyse the data that could facilitate the corroboration of the hypothesis. It is upon the corroboration of the hypothesis that a conclusion of the research could be surmised.

Yet although such an approach did dominate the research process it was also combined with an interpretivist methodology insofar as the various subquestions posed in this project demanded a less definitive and more discursive analysis. To return to Williamson, she describes the interpretivist research approach as “an umbrella term which is mainly associated with qualitative methods of research” (p.30) and explains that this method of research will focus mainly on “inductive reasoning” (p.31). Such analysis both facilitated the supporting of the hypothesis *and* was facilitated by the supporting of the hypothesis. More simply put, the project could only deduce whether or not the canon endured in the academic library by proposing a definitive concept of the canon (Research Question 3 - **How does one define the purpose of the canon within the context of video collection management?**). However, we can only analyse the criteria upon which canons are based once we have established their existence (Research Question 2 - **How does the information specialist define what constitutes the “most important” documents of information in the context of film collection management?**).

Research Methods

A template for this study was a case study carried out by Walters, the media librarian at St. Lawrence University (Walters, 2003). Walters used data acquired from the video acquisitions programme at his library (ranging from faculty demand to licensing and format requirements) to provide a sample list of assessment criteria that the collection manager might use to determine selection. What was significant about Walters’ analysis was that he concluded that librarians needed to conduct at least some level of qualitative analysis of films when deciding on whether or not they should be added to the collection.

This project differs from Walters' analysis in that it is less an analysis of the selection criteria employed by libraries than an effort to determine whether or not library collections adhere to the wider cultural and scholarly phenomenon of the canon. However, it also lends itself to an interpretative analysis that draws on Walters' approach when we try to determine what inferences can be drawn from library collections from evidence of the prevalence of "canonical works" in the collection (do collections represent a particular aesthetic standard?, do they reflect certain social groups? etc.).

The research consisted of two principle research strata – qualitative and quantitative.

Qualitative

The first part of the qualitative research process was the conducting of a literature review that contextualised the concepts of canons and collection management and defined the project's hypothesis. It also served to furnish the project with a theoretical definition of the canon.

The second part of the qualitative analysis was the examination of the four sample film canons against which the library catalogues were to be analysed. The four sample canons employed in the project were:

- AFI's 100 Years...100 Movies (10th Anniversary Edition)
- The top 50 highest ranking films from the Empire Magazine 500 Greatest Movies of All Time list
- Sight and Sound Critics' Poll 2002
- Paul Schrader's Film Canon

The AFI canon was compiled by 1500 American film industry professionals, including critics, artists and executives. The list purports to define a list of the 100 best American films. It was compiled in 2007 as an update to the 1997 list. The judging panel was furnished with a list of 400 American films from which to select what they considered to be top 100. This list is coded as the "Industry Canon".

The Empire Magazine 500 Greatest Movies of All Time list was compiled on the basis of votes by fifty critics, 150 unspecified Hollywood professionals and 10,000 readers of Empire magazine. It was compiled in 2009 and is coded as the "Populist Canon".

The Sight and Sound Critics' Poll 2002 was compiled on the basis of votes received from 145 critics across the world. This list is coded as the "Critical Canon".

Paul Schrader's Film Canon was a list of what Schrader considered to be the sixty greatest films of the twentieth century which he judged according to a Romantic aesthetic ideal. This is coded as the "Elitist Canon".

Quantitative

This part of the analysis took the form of a survey of seven library catalogues in order to ascertain how many of the films they included from the four sample lists, both individually and cumulatively. It is expected that this will indicate evidence of any canonical adherence amongst the sample set of libraries. The sample of libraries chosen for this part of the study were those from the seven Irish Universities – Dublin City University, University College Dublin, University of Limerick, Trinity College Dublin, University College Cork, NUI Galway and NUI Maynooth. This set were chosen because they provided a reasonably homogenous sample of seven institutions that all offered some form of dedicated film or media course at either a postgraduate or undergraduate level. Furthermore, logistically speaking, a survey of any more than seven library catalogues would not have been feasible within the timeframe provided for completing the research.

The survey of the libraries' catalogues will contribute to the corroboration of the central hypothesis in two ways:

1. By demonstrating a level of homogeneity that indicates a consensus from which might be inferred a common conception of the best materials to hold in a library film collection.
2. By analysing the frequency trends across both the four "canonical" lists and the seven catalogues using SPSS software in order to determine whether or not there was evidence to suggest that there is a common set of what might be considered the best films to include in a collection.

A set of questionnaires were also administered to all of the Irish Higher Education Institutes with a visible online library presence. The rationale for this method was to determine the criteria that they employ in collection evaluation and selection. It was anticipated that this might provide an overview that would augment any inferences that might be made into the survey. Unfortunately the level of responses received was too low to make any definitive interpretations.

Triangulation

According to Powell and Connaway, triangulation is the term used to describe the process whereby the researcher “uses two or more techniques and methods to test hypotheses and/or measure variables” (Powell and Connaway, 2004, p.124). Rather than carrying out a qualitative examination of the films in the lists and catalogues it was decided that it would be more effective to qualitatively assess each of the lists on the basis of how they were compiled, such as determining any evident underlying philosophies or motivations that underpinned their compilation, and looking at any secondary literature related to them. This provides a qualitative basis to augment the interpretations that might be drawn from the quantitative research.

With this in mind the project has been structured in the following form. The first chapter can be considered part of the literature review and is divided into four sections. It serves primarily to provide some background to the main body of research. The four areas of focus in the chapter are:

- Defining the role of the generic academic library collection in the postmodern information age
- Defining the wider purpose of the academic library
- Analysing how developments in both areas have contributed to the development of a new, non-evaluative canon
- Demonstrating why film collections can still be analysed against a more traditional idea of the canon

This chapter should illustrate why the idea of the canon retains particular significance in film collection management.

Chapter two is also part of the literature review and it demonstrates how and why the activity of evaluation has disappeared from film studies and how this has prompted academics to withdraw from the associated activity of canon formation. In the third chapter an analysis of secondary literature will be presented in order to demonstrate the residual endurance of the academic canon outside of the academy. The second part of the data analysis is chapter four and it also focuses on secondary sources, providing a brief qualitative analysis of the four canons. In chapter five the results of the quantitative research will be presented. The final two chapters are dedicated to the discussion of the data and the conclusions that can be drawn.

Literature Review

Chapter 1

1.1

In his analysis of the historical functions of libraries Krummel divides the history of the library into eight distinct historical periods according to the prevalent objective and purpose of the library in each era - quotidian (around 3000 BC), intellectual (around 300 BC), religious (around 500 AD), virtuous (around 1350 AD), scientific (around 1600 AD), utilitarian (around 1840 AD), and pragmatic (around 1910 and beyond) (Krummel, 1999). Drawing on Krummel's hypothesis, Kyrillidou suggests that, given the information explosion that has characterised the 21st Century, libraries have perhaps entered a new era defined by a new objective (Kyrillidou, 2002, pp.42-43). She cites Brophy (Brophy, 2000) who feels that the function of the library will be shaped by several factors stemming from the "information plethora" including the lack of enforced, universal metadata standards, the lack of quality control for the swathes of information objects that are available online, the unstable nature of such information objects and the often prevailing attitudes amongst digital natives¹ that they do not require an intermediary to access such information (Kyrillidou, 2002, p.43). He questions the popularly suggested role of the library as information gatekeeper and posits that future library models will actually be more variegated and heterogeneous. The five, distinct models for users in the 21st century are, as paraphrased by Kyrillidou, "a physical presence, a memory institution, a learning center (sic), a community resource, and (an) invisible intermediary" (ibid). In the academic arena, Kyrillidou has observed a movement towards the role of "invisible intermediary" with an increasing "disintermediation" on the part of the library in user information searches, facilitated by certain technological developments in the services that they provide, most notably the digitisation of collections.

One might interpret the growing consensus that academic libraries are abandoning their "archival" function and favouring an "access" function (Roberts and Rowley, 2004, p.11) as a corroboration of Kyrillidou's predictions. According to Clayton and Gorman, two collection management specialists, the role of the library is primarily to act as an "entry point and guide" for patrons to information resources (Clayton and Gorman, 2006, p.2). In

¹ According to the Digital Natives Project digital natives are those who those who "grow up immersed in digital technologies, for whom a life fully integrated with digital devices is the norm" (<http://youthandmedia.org/projects/digital-natives/>)

fact, the very notion that the academic library still has “a collection”, in the traditional sense of the term, is a subject of debate (ibid). With the shift in emphasis from archive to access the argument for building a comprehensive library wide collection in order to generate prestige has been eroded to the point of insignificance (Lee, 2003, p.29). Evidence suggests that clients are no longer concerned with whether or not a library holds a particular item but simply whether or not it, or more specifically the information it contains, can be accessed. “Distinctions between the held and the available on demand will increasingly be unimportant – indeed the two will increasingly be seen by clients as part of a seamless whole” (Clayton and Gorman, 2006, p.170). The availability of services such as interlibrary loans serves to undermine the notion that a library’s collection can be considered a singular entity. Furthermore, with the migration of materials, particularly journals, to digital formats that are accessible online thanks to licensing agreements that university libraries hold with vendors, the concept of “the library” becomes less that of a physical space than a “scholar’s portal” through which students can access high quality online information (Campbell, 2001). The role of the library is no longer focused on selecting, storing and managing such materials but rather on overcoming the challenges of “funding, law and access” on behalf of their users (Kahle et al., 2001 ctd. in Kyrillidou, 2002, p.43). As Clayton and Gorman write, “...the emerging emphasis is not on collection building but on collection management” (Clayton and Gorman, 2006, p.184) with the implication being that libraries have become responsible for providing a service rather than developing a collection.

In collection management and acquisitions literature, it is popularly accepted that the role of the library is to service the information needs of its users and to provide them with the most worthwhile and relevant information from the vast available tracts (Agee, 2007, p.1; Clayton and Gorman, 2006, p.xii; Prytherch, 2000, p.163). Even in the contemporary, digital age the production of traditional physical editions of books and films remains on the increase, yet paradoxically it has been observed that library acquisition budgets for physical items are decreasing (Clayton and Gorman, 2006, p.12). One may reasonably infer from this information that the proportion of useful items held in a collection to those available is constantly shrinking. In this environment one would assume that a deep subject knowledge would be required by academic librarians to optimise acquisitions and collection development. However, surprisingly this feature of librarianship is not given any great emphasis in much of the contemporary, generic literature on the pedagogical role of library collections.

For example in the literature dedicated to the practice of collection management one often finds that a great importance is attached to the activity of evaluation in the process of developing a collection (Agee, 2007, p.15; Clayton and Gorman, 2006, p.12). There are two accepted methods of evaluation - user-centred and collection-centred - which are not usually considered to be mutually exclusive. According to Agee, a user-centred approach will tend to analyse data captured from analyses of "circulation, inter-library loan, consortia and other user groups" whereas the collection-centred method will tend to focus on alternative sources of data such as "the quantity of books in a popular genre or subject area, or the physical quality of frequently circulated materials" (Agee, 2007, p.15) or perhaps measuring the libraries current holdings in a particular subject area against standard lists and bibliographies (Clayton and Gorman, 2006, pp.177-178). However, the information contained within the collection is notable by its absence from the above evaluation criteria.

In 1989, Magrill and Corbin asserted that "collection evaluation is concerned with how good a collection is in terms of the kinds of materials in it and the value of each item in relation to items not in the collection, to the community being served and to the library's potential users" (ctd. in Clayton and Gorman, p.161). In the intervening years the question of how intrinsically "good" the items in a collection are has become less important than "whether the users and decision makers think it so" (p.163). The idea of employing subject specialists to evaluate collections according to their expert judgments once propagated by collection experts such as Lancaster (Lancaster, 1993, p.28) is absent from contemporary literature. The collection manager is now unlikely to concern him/herself with assessing a collection's inherent "goodness" (Clayton and Gorman, 2006, p.180) and will probably focus on five particular factors (p.181): size; utilization; access; age; condition.

It is noticeable that "quality", in relation to the collection's information content, is absent and the authors argue that user-centred methods are the more prevalent and effective of the two assessment techniques. It would appear that based on the extensive work carried out on the subject of collection management by Clayton, Gorman and Agee the academic library has seemingly shed its function as an evaluator of information. According to Pierre, one of the consequences of this development is that "academic libraries have come to a point where searching the database has acquired hegemonic status and the search is more important than the knowledge it uncovers" (Pierre, 2004). That is to say that there is now less of a tendency for libraries to supply information than to facilitate searches, thereby embracing the role of the "invisible intermediary" (Kyrillidou, 2002, p.44).

1.2

As the relevance of the information held in collections continues to dissipate, the means for uncovering it appear to, almost exponentially, accrue greater importance. This phenomenon is perhaps best embodied by the rise of information literacy instruction in libraries. Williams (Williams, 2006) argues that, although there are benefits to be had by students receiving some instruction in the art of navigation, the role of information literacy in the mission of the library and its value to students and researchers is consistently overemphasised. Williams takes particular issue with the assertion by many information literacy practitioners and specialists that it is inherent to “lifelong learning” in the modern, educationally oriented Western society. While this in itself might appear to be a reasonable claim, Williams senses a conflation of the two concepts (information literacy and lifelong learning) to the point where attaining information literacy is considered to be the only criterion for attaining the skills for lifelong learning and all of its associated benefits. A further offshoot of such a perspective is that information literacy instruction becomes decontextualised from any academic discipline and he decries the burgeoning sentiment in library and information science literature that information literacy instruction is just as important as the disciplines it purports to support.

Wilder (Wilder, 2005) harbours similar suspicions of the “discipline”. His argument is even more condemnatory whereby he sees information seeking skills as simply being a tool to facilitate research. He cites Tennant’s comments that “only librarians like to search; everyone else likes to find” (ctd. in Wilder, 2005). His argument is that in providing information literacy instruction that is segregated from disciplinary instruction searching becomes an end in itself. Wilder’s polemic is essentially that libraries serve the purpose of assisting students in attaining disciplinary knowledge and this needs to be facilitated by academic librarians. Rather than focusing on teaching students to conduct searches they should provide students with disciplinary insight into their collections.

Pierre laments the movement of libraries away from assisting in students’ interpretation of the knowledge that they access in the library towards an institutionalised, non-evaluative role. He and others have argued that if libraries are to meet their responsibilities as educators then they need to shed this façade of objectivity and thereby encourage students to challenge dominant ideologies that will genuinely facilitate their wider learning and critical thinking (Harley et al., 2001, p.28). As Lee argues, perhaps pre-empting a relativist, postmodern riposte, libraries and their constituent services and activities are human constructs and will inevitably be tainted by human biases but just as an

evaluation of a collection's inherent worth is fraught with the prejudices of the assessor, the library's interpretation of users' needs will also be subject to similar biases (Lee, 2003, pp.30-31).

Yet, as libraries labour under the notion of their role being non-evaluative and continue to focus simply on assisting in their users' navigation of the contents of the homogenised packages of digital information resources that they lease from external vendors, the disjunction between the subject librarian and a deep subject knowledge is exacerbated (Pierre, 2004). Consequently, libraries become unable to contribute to students' interpretations of the information in these "collections" (ibid). As Kieft wrote in 1995:

Librarians are not in the business of teaching students how to use a library. Rather they are in the business of teaching students how to think through their research problems and papers, how to perform a variety of intellectual tasks (Kieft, 1995).

According to Foucault the arrangement of knowledge in the academic library should facilitate the furthering of knowledge (ctd. by Pierre, 2004). Yet the emphasis that is currently placed on navigation serves to generate a singular, homogenised knowledge based simply on the information provided in the generic database packages provided by the libraries (Pierre, 2004). In other words, as academic librarians lose control over the knowledge that it held in their libraries, students will simply be given identical, generic instruction on how to access the same information. Accordingly the work that they produce becomes homogenous, based as it is on the same core sources which have accrued importance thanks primarily to their accessibility. Even Clayton and Gorman, exponents of the user focused approach to collection evaluation, acknowledge that the perception that use is directly correlated with value must be tempered by an awareness that such use might simply represent the information's availability. A failure to acknowledge this caveat may mean that collections simply "guarantee the status quo" and fail to contribute to the furthering of knowledge (Clayton and Gorman, 2006, p.171). Even back as far as 1982 the idea that evaluating collections according to use would perpetuate the existing canon had significant weight (Lancaster, 1982, p.15).

1.3

It is a popularly held that the canon is reflected in the state of the curriculum (Karras, 2007, p.123). On this evidence one might imagine that the traditional role of the canon in the library as a list of the most important works or, as Cyzyk claims, “the best in what has been written throughout history” (Cyzyk, 1993, p.60) has been supplanted by a new function. In 2000, at the dawn of the digital information age, Collins offered her perspective on how the digitisation of libraries’ collections would affect the role of the library in the formation of canons (Collins, 2000). She carried out an extensive literature review of articles related to both the subjects of digitisation and the role of the canon in the library to support her hypothesis. She cites an article by Smith and Tibbo from 1996 that, acting as an interesting forerunner to Anderson’s long tail theory, offered the cautious prediction that the digitisation of collections would allow librarians in the humanities to desist from an almost exclusive adherence to canonical works when selecting items for the collection. Rather, they accurately envisaged the availability of a much wider selection of information objects in the digital era and posited that libraries could offer a vast quantity of previously inaccessible items in their collections alongside more traditional canonical works (Smith and Tibbo, 1996). She also cites Atkinson who made a very similar point in 1998 but who, also quite presciently, argued that in the digital age collections would not be developed according to what were considered the “best” items but rather on the basis of what users want and need (Atkinson, 1998). And certainly Atkinson’s prediction was incredibly accurate insofar as much of the current specialist literature tends to be predicated on the conflict between selecting those titles that librarians consider users to need and those titles that users want as opposed to the intrinsic quality or importance of titles (Clayton and Gorman, 2006, p.74). Atkinson strongly implies that with the increasingly hegemonic user focused approach the role of the library in the development of the canon will be removed and that, as a consequence, eventually the canon itself will disappear.

However, perhaps Collins offers an even greater display of clairvoyance in her rebuttal of Atkinson’s conclusion. While she agrees with his assessment regarding the direction that academic librarianship in the humanities is taking she refutes the notion that this will prompt the demise of the canon and argues that as “the availability of electronic journals in full text is rapidly becoming the only discriminating factor in undergraduate choice of materials for research, smaller college libraries may find themselves altering their collections accordingly. On the one hand the canon will remain the standard by which

collections are measured, on the other hand there seems to be a chance that the canon will no longer represent what is the “best” in everything ever written, but what is the most easily accessible” (Collins, 2000). Her hypothesis is that canons will endure, with entry into the canon assured by accessibility rather than quality. This view would seem to be endorsed by the evidence presented in the first half of this chapter and corresponds with the relativist notion of the “importance” of knowledge proposed by Karras’ model. While services such as interlibrary loans could be seen to channel the spirit of the long tail (“these services cater to a steady aggregation of niche markets which accumulates to a larger market share than that represented by the smaller market of identical requests” (Cohen, 2007, vi)) and thereby challenge the authority of existing canons, the current focus that is placed on navigating digital collections in the academic library actually reinforces the concept of a canon of works but with an implicitly alternative criteria (accessibility rather than “quality”).

1.4

At this juncture it should be borne in mind that the focus of the majority of the literature referenced thus far has been on collections of text materials. There are, in fact, strong arguments to suggest that film collections fit the more “traditional” concept of the collection, as a singular, tangible, physical entity housed in the library and that they are therefore less susceptible to falling into the trap of developing canons based primarily on the criteria of availability.

A distinguishing feature of popular film collections is their interdisciplinary nature. The emergence of film studies as a facet of various academic disciplines is often seen as representative of the present postmodern, interdisciplinary nature of academia (Dyki, 2002, p.200). And just as the borders separating disciplines have dissolved, interactions between different media are now more prevalent than ever before, with recurring phenomena such as intertextuality not confined to one specific medium. Viral marketing campaigns, the infinite functions of YouTube videos and the continued global strength of the film industry and popularity of feature films have all contributed to our present condition where the boundaries between the print and audiovisual media have become increasingly permeable (Drotner, 2000). Yet, in light of the fluidity between formats and the interdisciplinary nature of film collections, a subcollection of popular film materials within an academic library is likely to be much closer to what we might consider to be a collection in the classical sense of the term, thereby allowing for a more conventional assessment of its intrinsic value.

Although there is currently a considerable amount of anticipation surrounding the transfer of film collections from a physical to a digital format, within the field of media librarianship popular film collections have thus far resisted widespread digitisation. The major problem that is associated with video-on-demand is that of licensing. There are essentially three models for the delivery of video-on-demand in libraries. The first is when files are supplied by the distributor and then maintained on and accessed from the library’s local server. The second option is that available files are encoded by the library and then maintained on the local server. Finally, access can simply be provided via the distributor’s remote server (Handman, 2010, p.327). In all three cases, licensing is an issue, both from the perspective of what the distributor can provide and because licensing and copyright will inevitably restrict what can be encoded.

Currently most distributors only offer institutions license to content over a fixed rather than an indefinite term, thus making it alien from any current or previous library acquisition model. Obviously it differs from simply buying a physical item which the library can store for as long as it needs and also from the annual subscription model of online journals and serials. The licensing in this case perhaps seems more like “rebuying” a film at the time of license renewal when contrasted with the DVD model where the library purchases the information and owns it in perpetuity, (Handman, 2010, p.328). The explanation for this procedure is that distributors will often hold similar deals with filmmakers who, in turn, may need to periodically renew various intellectual property rights for the intellectual property used in their films (music etc.). One of the major issues that can emerge from this type of licensing arrangement is that libraries have to integrate video-on-demand into their serials budget thus making it a continuing financial obligation. The consequence of this is that, given the need to renew existing titles, institutions have less cash for the acquisition of new ones thereby negating the many of the benefits of a video-on-demand service (ibid) and preventing the acquisition of niche titles. A further problem is that certain video-on-demand files that are considered to be valuable and important could be taken offline on the basis of a dispute between the filmmaker and the distributor. If the “broader mission of the (academic) library” is to “build and maintain longstanding collections of materials that are responsive to the changing needs of teaching and scholarship over long periods of time” then surely this is being undermined by maintaining a collection that is essentially temporal in nature (p. 329).

As such, the DVD format rather than video-on-demand continues to be the predominant format in libraries’ film collections. The notion of a film collection is therefore often more singular and tangible than the wider, contemporary library collection insofar as the user tends to be reliant on those materials that are housed in the library and not simply on what information is accessible via the library. Furthermore the resources available to them are not usually extensible. For example, although there is some discrepancy between the views expressed on the subject of the interlibrary loan of films by experts, with some strongly in favour (Bergman, 2010, p.339; Brancolini, 2002, pp.57-58) and others opposed on the grounds of the practical obstacles involved (Lonergan, 2009, p.192), there is some consensus on the logistical difficulties of such an activity, particularly concerning licensing. Furthermore, given the widespread availability of DVDs and digital downloads of films outside the library, often facilitated by long tail developments on the World Wide Web, and

the comparatively low cost of DVDs compared with other materials in the library it often simply doesn't make practical sense for the library to offer such a service.

Film collections, popular fiction collections and other recreational areas of the academic library are also often considered to partly fulfil an archival function insofar as they may be considered cultural artefacts (Alsop, 2007; Dyki, 2002; Van Fleet, 2003; Vogelson and Lewis, 2002). They may exist to service current cultural studies courses but their continuing existence may also be for reasons of posterity. Consequently, collections of popular culture are generally not considered to be transient. An emphasis is generally placed on "building a collection rather than simply providing a service" (Walters, 2003, p.167) and therefore such collections tend to be immune from weeding (ibid).

However it should be acknowledged that there is some dissent from this consensus. An argument that has been presented is that a film collection should be seen as a service that is constantly in use rather than an archive. As Albitz states:

If videos go unused, why purchase them at all? In most cases media centers (sic) are established as working collections, not archives. If these collections go unused then the mission of the institution goes unsupported (Albitz, 2001, p.7).

Bergman also takes this approach, drawing on Albitz herself, although there is an ugly, (although perhaps unfortunately necessary) pragmatism in her justification for ensuring that a film collection is availed of by patrons, if only to ensure renewed budgetary support and commitment from the library's administration. "It is not necessarily a bad thing to have patrons using the library for their Saturday night entertainment as well as curricular needs" (Bergman, 2010, p. 345).

But even allowing for this divergence from a classical conception of the collection it is noticeable that the literature on maintaining a film collection presents far less of a disjunction between subject expertise and film collection management than generic collection management literature even if it does tend to shy away from a conventionally evaluative approach.

Effective video selection requires thorough familiarity with the curricula supported by the collection, technical knowledge of cinematic expression and expertise in evaluating educational media for purchase and for use. If the collection includes

feature films on video, the selector should also be familiar with the discipline of film studies and knowledgeable about film as art (Brancolini, 2002, pp.62-62).

In Dyki's article on managing an academic film collection she also encourages a discipline focused approach (Dyki, 2002). Rather than recommending catalogues or library packages from large vendors as one might find in the more general collection management literature, she encourages librarians to foster a familiarity with the discipline and recommends several publications (*Cinéaste*, *Film Comment*, *New York Times* and *Sight and Sound*) from which media librarians might source reliable reviews that will inform their selections (p.217). She also recommends consulting academic film theory material when compiling a core video collection and keeping up with developments in film theory and academia (206).

As Quinn observes, "subject specialists, by virtue of their expertise, are products of established canons as well as contributors to them" (Quinn, 1994, p.2). Consequently, it is probable that through familiarity with canonical works subject librarians will perpetuate existing canons (Doherty, 1998, p.404). Therefore it would appear that film canons will retain a central role in libraries' film collections. However, while their makeup is not based simply on accessibility, nor are they necessarily based on what is considered to be the "best" information. In the 2002 Handman edited handbook, *Video Collection Development in Multi-type Libraries*, there are three chapters dedicated to the selection resources that are available to academic librarians developing a film collection (Albitz, 2002; Handman, 2002; Goldman and Sanders, 2002). In all three chapters, although the goal is to provide insight into selecting resources for the library, the language is deliberately non-evaluative and non-elitist. Albitz essentially provides a directory of a diverse set of information resources from journals to websites while the selection criteria in the other two chapters are multiculturalism (Handman, 2002) and finding obscure and culturally non-dominant items (Goldman and Sanders, 2002). This is, perhaps, to be expected. Film and other objects of popular culture are often held in libraries at the behest of coordinators of courses on cultural studies and their inclusion in the collections of libraries may be perceived as simply symptomatic of wider cultural phenomena (Dyki, 2002; Van Fleet, 2003). Even film studies as a stand-alone discipline has a mongrel lineage, evolving and borrowing from a variety of disciplines. As we touched upon in the introduction, since the 1980s theoretical developments within the discipline have made it increasingly pluralist and democratic with any evaluative tendencies having been diminished to the point of disappearance (Dyki, 2002, pp.202-204). Developments in video technology have had a similar democratising effect on

the subject (p.208). Given these internal and external developments, the role of the library/librarian as a potential arbiter of good taste becomes fraught.

There are other elements that may also influence selection. Obviously the scope of a popular culture collection in any medium will inevitably be quite narrow as a library is unlikely to stock every single film that is currently available (Alsop, 2007, p.582). One proposed solution is for the library to consciously develop collections with niche areas of focus (ibid). This should ensure that the collection adequately addresses certain key areas rather than offering a haphazard and disparate selection of items in a variety of areas. Walters endorses such a view, albeit from a slightly alternative perspective, and states that the library needs to accept that it cannot equally meet the needs of all of its users, nor can it equally represent all ideologies. Rather, libraries should focus on making “an explicit attempt to acquire materials that students are unlikely to encounter outside the academic environment” (pp.162-163). The argument that the library is not in competition with hit driven services such as video rental stores (Franco, 2002, pp.310-312) may seem slightly antiquated and its inclusion in a contemporary project may seem like something of an anachronism in this era of Amazon.co.uk, iTunes and other online retailers not bound by the same limits of physical storage space as traditional film and video retailers. Yet its relevance remains. In 2002 Crawford anticipated the move away from a hit driven culture, also pre-empting Chris Anderson’s long tail theory, and he felt that this change should be reflected in the academic library, particularly if the library was considered to play a role in preserving cultural memory (Crawford, 2002, p.4).

Vogelson and Lewis, referring specifically to multi-cultural materials, make an excellent, if unfortunately condescending, point on the necessity of contextualising information held in the library:

The unsophisticated viewer may have difficulties appreciating the norms of another culture or may require historical, social or cultural background and context...Audiences may require additional background information to fully appreciate the subtleties of the message. Information about the filmmaker, the political or social context in which the video was made, the relations of the video to others of a similar genre and the traditions, folklore and customs upon which the story is built may be required to fully appreciate the impact of the message (Vogelson and Lewis, 2002, p.178)

Their argument is that accessibility alone should not be the ideological underpinning of a collection. Library collections should facilitate access to worthwhile information. Access should not be an end in itself.

Chapter 2

Postmodernism is not only our dominant culture now but in some ways it's our only culture. You might say that as auteurism turned junk into art, postmodernism turns art into junk. (Rosenbaum qtd. in Hoberman and Rosenbaum, 1991, p.323)

In addition to the phenomenon of endless choice articulated by Anderson, in the nascent postmodern, digital age cultural canons and hierarchies of taste have been diversified and shattered and the notion that a library could build a collection of film materials based on an outmoded, traditional concept of what is “worthy” or “important” is, at least philosophically, debatable. In 1996 Susan Sontag asserted that cinephilia was dead, basing her claim on the decline of the cineclub and the cinematheque, previously important centres for the cinephile’s cinematic discoveries (Sontag, 1996). Desser does not see Sontag’s claims as evidence of the death of the phenomenon but rather he suggests that the reality she describes merely confirms cinephilia’s diversification and its assumption of a fragmented form (Desser, 2005). Although Desser does overlook Sontag’s suspicion of hermeneutics in art criticism (Sontag, 2001) he describes cinephilia in the post-VHS, web era as having moved beyond a uniform “movement” and demonstrates why, in both a real and theoretical sense, the idea that singular, authoritative canons and entirely comprehensive histories of cinema are no longer possible. The democratization of film production and distribution, prompted by technological developments in both production equipment and film viewing technology, has led to the creation of various independent, coexisting global film cultures and an overall body of work and history within the medium that is now beyond comprehensive documentation (Desser, 2005). Similarly, definitive critical discourses have become a thing of the past in the era of Web 2.0 as an infinite number of discourses may coexist on websites, blogs, discussion lists and in various other formats. Consequently, many canons may coexist, and perhaps overlap, and, in light of Desser’s discoveries, one might ask on what basis one can make judgements of value and, to a lesser extent, meaning? However, as Paul Schrader, an ardent supporter of the concept of the film canon as a barometer of value, asks “...is a sliding scale of multiple aesthetics the same as no scale at all” (Schrader, 2006, p.42). He firmly asserts that it is not and nor is it “an acceptable excuse to stop making judgements” (ibid).

The development of home video technology, particularly the VHS and DVD, was a significant catalyst in these developments. In some quarters these developments have been

seen as analogous to the emergence of the printing press in literature as it opens up the close analysis of cinema to the masses as opposed to a small elite of critics and academics (Dyki, 2002, p208). Kent Jones articulates the phenomenon as the means by which “home video had made each film into a consumer item and potential fetish object which could be stopped, started, reversed, repeated or abandoned at will” (ctd. in Rosenbaum and Martin, 2003, p.8). This, Brenez argues, diversifies cinephilia, not simply by breaking down the barriers between genres and national cinemas but also by abolishing the segregation between high and low art in film as viewers can develop their own tastes and are no longer confined by limits of distribution and, by extension, criticism (ctd. in Rosenbaum and Martin, 2003, p.25).

In this environment of endless choice and disparate, coexisting critical discourses, the compilation of comprehensive library film collections is considered to be impossible and singular assertions of value are perceived to carry little weight. Definitive critical film histories such as Andrew Sarris’s *The American Cinema*, first published in 1968, are simply no longer considered credible examples of film theory. The authoritative tone of Sarris’s work, where his judgements on directors and films are presented as definitive history and are not couched in any sense of self-awareness of their inherent subjectivity, is entirely alien to modern film theory. His definitive and bold statements on why John Ford is superior to John Huston now appear somewhat antiquated and the text has become little more than a relic of a bygone era in film studies. Textbooks such as *The American Cinema* or V.F. Perkins’s *Understanding Film*, which claim to offer systematic criteria for evaluation are now more likely to be referenced as artefacts in historical analyses of film criticism than in a methodology essay for a film studies thesis. Obviously one can attribute this, in part, to the impossibility of any individual undertaking such a project that could lend itself a similar degree of authority simply because of the volume of films and film cultures in existence. However perhaps an even more important contributory factor is how the theory that is used to study and evaluate art, literature and other art and cultural objects has developed over the second half of the twentieth century.

As has been touched upon in the introduction, many of the certainties of the art critic of the 19th Century were debunked over the course of the 20th Century. In 1936 Walter Benjamin claimed that with the invention of photography society had developed a capacity for mechanical reproduction that had radically altered how we perceive art (Schrader, 2006, p.39). The classic aesthetic values of “authenticity, permanence and uniqueness” (ibid) were

immediately rendered obsolete by the possibilities of replication and reproduction that were facilitated by photography and film. These Romantic ideals, along with the Classical notion of Beauty, had formed the basis of the art canon (ibid). Eco built on this argument later in the century with his analysis of the “mass media” (namely film, television and radio). Writing in 1983 he offered a very prescient analysis, describing the phenomenon of the “multiplication of the media” (Eco, 1986, p.148). His thesis is that as the instruments of the media continue to extend, the central authority, be it political or economic, loses any control that it had on transmissions. Images and messages communicated within what he terms the “mass media” are replicated and distorted to the point where the origin of the message and the message itself become unclear. Obviously this phenomenon is exacerbated in the Web era. Objects created within this environment, in this instance films, have their messages at once diluted, conflated and pluralised as they are transmitted through the mass media. Film, television and radio become simply an “incontrollable plurality of messages that each individual uses to make up his own composition with the remote control switch” (ibid). The messages and meanings of (post)modern cultural objects are no longer the preserve of the creator but are enforced by the consumer. The mass media are “genealogical” because “every new invention sets off a chain reaction of inventions” and “produces a sort of common language”. Yet they also have “no memory” because once this chain of replications and imitations has begun “no one can remember who started it, and the head of the clan is confused with the latest great grandson” (p.146). Our analysis of older films is often refracted through an awareness of more recent ones and separated from any chronological and historical reality. In this postmodern age where images are constantly being reproduced films are ultimately enslaved to intertextuality, be it deliberately or not, and will therefore always be viewed on some level as repetitions (Eco qtd. in Allen, pp.194-195). And without a tangible meaning evaluation becomes almost impossible.

Yet, in the 1960s, drawing on the annual “best of” lists from French film publications such as *Cahiers du Cinéma*, Andrew Sarris (again) proposed a new set of theoretical criteria upon which to evaluate films (Sarris, 1962). He applied Romantic theories of authorship to the criticism of popular Hollywood films and developed the concept of the director as “auteur”. The auteur was a superior form of director, one who could communicate his worldview or ideology within his work. Sarris also felt that such a worldview became more visible and expressive when analysed as part of an oeuvre. Sarris’s philosophy drew largely on the work of the French auteurist critics such as Truffaut and Godard who had previously

popularised the idea of the director as author in French language criticism. This was the criteria that he presented upon which the film student could evaluate films with the implication being that even the worst work of the “auteur” was superior to the best of the mere “metteur-en-scene”. The underlying motivation in his espousal of this theory was to legitimise the Hollywood picture as artistically viable while also elevating the practice of film criticism from hobbyist to academic status (Staiger, 1985, p.11). Writing in 1977, Sarris acknowledged that “auteurism has less to do with the way movies are made than with the way they are elucidated and evaluated...It is more a critical instrument than a creative inspiration” (Sarris, 2003, p.28). By hailing a director as an auteur or denigrating them as a mere “metteur-en-scene” criticism of an individual film often seemed to become submerged under a review of a director’s ideology (Crofts, p.314). By appropriating this critical concept to a more rigorous, theoretical domain (the university) Sarris and other like-minded theorists appeared to imply that there existed a means for articulating value in the study of film.

The theory was adopted by structuralists such as Wollen (Wollen, 1998; Wollen, 2003) and, according to Rosenbaum, the “Pantheon” of films proposed by Sarris according to the auteurist credentials of their creators was initially widely embraced as a curricular template by film studies lecturers. Ultimately, however, its unscientific nature saw it disregarded as “too facile, too romantic, too apolitical” (Rosenbaum, 2004, xv). One of the more extreme theoretical reactions to Sarris’s Romantic concept of the auteur was the subsequent embrace of the Roland Barthes infused concept of the “author as effect of text” (Crofts, pp.318-319). Essentially this theory was strongly based on Barthes concept of the death of the author at the hands of the all powerful reader. Barthes claimed that in the postmodern era the text lost any intrinsic meaning and meaning was only applied at the whim of the reader based on their interpretations. In Roland Barthes’ hugely influential *Death of the Author* article he argues that in the postmodern age the author no longer controls the meaning of the text, taking as his starting point the postmodernist position that “the text is a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centres of culture” (Barthes, 1977, p.146). Barthes makes five points to support his position.

1. One cannot really consider the author in the postmodern era as the originator of the text because from the moment of writing the text is open to interpretation by the reader and thereby disconnected from the author.

2. Writing cannot be considered an act of originality as it is ultimately a manipulation of a pre-existent body of language.
3. The text has “no other origin than language itself, language that ceaselessly calls into question all origins”.
4. The notion of an author now has no greater function than acting as an activity of criticism, allowing the critic to impose a limit of meaning on the text.
5. “A text is made up of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody , contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author”

Barthes underlines his argument with the point that everything within a text is full of meaning and therefore open to interpretation. “This is not a matter of art (on the part of the narrator) but of structure: in the realm of discourse, what is noted is, by definition, notable. Even were a detail to appear insignificant, resistant to all functionality, it would nonetheless end up with precisely the meaning of absurdity or uselessness” (p.89).

One finds a similar argument in the postmodern approach. Responsibility for the disappearance of evaluation from the academic study of the arts is usually laid at the door of pioneers of postmodern theory such as Frederic Jameson whose hypotheses have both directly and indirectly permeated most areas of the Humanities and Social Sciences. Without wishing to get drawn into a discussion on the various stages of capitalism and capitalist society, or the suddenly very contemporary issues of moral and cultural relativism, it would be worth examining the postmodern position. According to Jameson, with the multiplication of the media and the loss of control over transmissions by the “central authority”, along with the perpetuation of replications, distortions and repetitions by the technologies of the mass media, society begins to lack a dominant cultural norm as it simply becomes based on variants of existing images and utterances (ctd. in Allen, 2000, p.181). “It might seem that in a postmodern context, intertextual codes and practices predominate because of a loss of any access to reality” (Allen, 2000, p. 183). The essence of the argument is that, in a Baudrillardian sense, postmodern late capitalist society has become so pervaded with cultural codes and clichés that intertextuality thrives to the point where everything becomes a simulacrum without any tangible referent based in reality. Yet without a

dominant, homogenous cultural norm to satirise or endorse intertextuality becomes devoid of meaning as pastiche prevails over parody. "Intertextual practice, no longer capable of radical double voicedness, collapses into a kind of pointless resurrection of past styles and past voices" (Allen, 2000, p.184). Against this backdrop canons become entirely arbitrary.

For this reason many in the library and information sciences are dubious of the merits of postmodern theory. "Whereas modernism espouses universal truths and a fixed reality, postmodernism questions these ideas and instead asserts that there is no universal truth or singular version of reality" (Harley et. al, 2001, p.23). Doherty describes the relativist, "postmodern anarchic view" (Doherty, 1998, p.405) as anathema to library and collection management, suggesting that adherence to the pluralist notions that the theorists espouse would cause chaos in the academic library. Quinn endorses this position arguing that such suspicions are eminently understandable when adherence to such thinking to the letter "results in an extreme relativism that equates *Plato* with *Peanuts*" (Quinn, 1996, p.1).

Yet for all their criticisms it is not clear exactly where librarians can look for guidance in how to evaluate films. Long suggested that the rise of social sciences in the Humanities has exacerbated the unwillingness of academia to involve itself in evaluation (Long, 2006, p.24). Schrader claims that in the university art is now only analysed "as a social phenomenon" (Schrader, 2006, p.41). Clearly such an approach is incompatible with the Romantic, evaluative auteurist agenda espoused by Sarris. Writing on the germinations of the auteur theory in French criticism in 1957 even auteurist sympathiser André Bazin observed the deficiencies of the theory as a means for analysing films' role in wider culture:

The evolution of Western Art towards greater personalisation should definitely be considered as a step forward, as a refinement of culture, but only as long as this individualisation remains only a final perfection and does not claim to define culture...the social determinism, the historical combination of circumstances and the technical background which, to a large extent, determine it (Bazin, 1957, p.25).

There are obvious merits to the "art as a product of culture" attitude. Firstly, this facilitates the growth of disciplines that focus on minority and alternative cultural groupings (Postcolonial studies, Womens' Studies, Black Studies, LGBT Studies, etc.). In this area films tend to be analysed within their narrower cultural contexts rather than their comparative, aesthetic value to the Hollywood cinema of the American dominant white male. Evaluating films against a narrow Romantic set of values proposed by white academics could be seen to

propagate elitist and exclusionist tendencies in academia - "Selection predisposes exclusion" (Schrader, 2006, p.39). This development has been hailed as laudable in other quarters because as academia suspends immediate textual evaluation it can avoid overlooking objects worthy of analysis that may have obvious aesthetic imperfections (Martin and Naremore, 2003). This also means that film studies has become primarily an ethnographic pursuit (Schrader, 2006). In such an academic environment the notion of film canons (in the traditional sense of the best/most important knowledge of all that is known) appears patently outmoded. Although one might disagree with the excesses of several of the postmodernist and semiotically infused assessments (and Barthes' argument for the recognition of the death of the author and, by extension, the canon will be tackled in more detail in the next chapter) in film academia it is certainly true that the purpose of study is no longer to evaluate.

Data Analysis

Chapter 3

The fact that the academic study of film has become primarily non-evaluative is beyond question. Yet, however commendable and democratic the postmodernist approaches may appear, they are also, in many respects, patently false. Even in a purely theoretical sense, the potential interpretations of a text are not limitless. Umberto Eco, himself a semiologist, devised the theory of the “hermeneutic circle” to counter, what he felt, was a phenomenon of “overinterpretation” in the analysis of art, literature and film (Eco, 1992). Eco’s “hermeneutic circle” theory demonstrates an interesting intersection with the aforementioned structuralist approach. He posits that “a text is a device conceived in order to produce a model reader” and that “the initiative of the model reader consists in figuring out a model author that is not the empirical one and that, in the end, coincides with the intention of the text” (p.64). According to Eco, because the model author is created through the interpretation of semiotic, textual strategies by the reader, the empirical author’s intentions are irrelevant (p.66) and, in any case, an author’s articulation of their intentions can be unreliable (pp.72-73). As such he asserts that the intentions of the empirical author are “radically useless” (65). However, Eco also points out that such interpretations can only be made within the parameters of the text. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith offers the rather crude analogy of treating films as “singular commoditised objects” (Nowell-Smith, 1976, p.29). One can use a product however one wishes although it will often have been designed to serve a particular purpose. Nonetheless in certain cases it may hold several functions or in others its main functions may be unclear. For example, one may buy a toaster and its main purpose in the eyes of most rational people would be to toast bread. But one might use it to murder someone by strangling them with the cable. However, one could not wash ones clothes with it. Similarly, there are limits as to how one might interpret a film based on the aesthetic arrangements on display. And as Schrader, an ardent supporter of the concept of the film canon as a barometer of value, asks “...is a sliding scale of multiple aesthetics the same as no scale at all” (Schrader, 2006, p.42). He firmly asserts that it is not and nor is it “an acceptable excuse to stop making judgements” (ibid).

Linda Hutcheon has offered the hypothesis that the ages of modernism and postmodernism can never be entirely oppositional. She argues that while postmodern theory suggests that postmodernism is detached from the meanings of modernism and simply mindlessly replicates the codes of modernism, surely there must be some recognition

of the significance of the modernist codes that they mimic (ctd. in Allen, 2000, pp. 188-189). More simply put, by acknowledging the repetitions of the text (through irony, parody, self-conscious pastiche, etc.) the author can ultimately retain a greater level of control over how the text is interpreted (Eco ctd. in Allen, 2000, pp.194-195).

As we have seen, Barthes considers the notion of the author to simply be a means for the critic to impose a limit of meaning on the text and one can see a certain truth in this position insofar as the author could be considered to be a superfluous critical concept designed to arrange, evaluate and collect texts (as the auteurists attempted). Nevertheless, Barthes did make this claim in the context of an argument designed to prove the death of the author and the bestowal of complete power over the text onto the reader. Song Hwee Lim counters this claim by pointing to the fact that the author is himself a reader and that through the use of deliberate intertextual reference points he exhibits his own reading/viewing history. Furthermore, noting the concepts of homage and pastiche, Lim considers how the author can deliberately impose a limited meaning on the text (Lim, 2007, pp.230-231). Although it should be noted that the reader/audience is free to ignore these references and interpret the text however they choose it is clear that these references do imply a limit of meaning for the intertextually aware viewer. For example, a film such as *Kill Bill Vol. 2* will more than likely be read as a pastiche of 1970s Kung Fu films and 1960s Spaghetti Westerns because the director, Quentin Tarantino, deliberately highlights his appropriation of the tropes of these genres in the film. Films are not (always) meaningless regurgitations of pre-existent tropes, ignorant of their duplicity and unoriginality.

Quinn applies such theoretical rigour to the concept of canons themselves. He cites Balakian's argument that the critic is not an artist but an intermediary between the artist and the audience. The critic or scholar may colour an audience's interpretation of the artistic object but ultimately the author's intentions impose a limit of meaning and interpretations (they may be vast but not infinite) (ctd. in Quinn, 1994, pp.5-6). Essentially, lists and canons must adhere to some overriding methodology, be it personal preference, perceived value, ideology etc. Canons can be compiled and do impose limits of meaning on their constituent titles but only because the potential meanings of these objects are themselves limited.

While film studies may have discredited the notion of the Romantic figure of the auteur, to suggest that evaluation no longer occurs seems absurd and ignores the fact that,

in a very practical sense, canons are prevalent in modern culture. Schrader likens the perpetuation of canons to 19th Century anti-sodomy laws “repudiated in principle, performed in practice” (Schrader, 2006, p.35) describing curricular lists and “best of” lists as “de facto canons” (ibid). “Best of” lists are prevalent in newspapers, film magazines, television and radio programmes and on websites. The famed *Sight and Sound* top ten film and director lists are endowed with particular significance, generally generating large media attention upon publication each decade (Solomons, 2002). Furthermore, even ignoring the now innocuous trend of popular culture whereby directors are generally acknowledged as the chief creative force on a film, the auteur theory in its truer, more theoretical sense, has had a significant impact on film criticism. The notion that a director can achieve auteur status (i.e. express a detectable personal vision across an oeuvre) is in many circles recognised as a source of merit. The idea that we may often praise a director for a perceived unity of vision above the intrinsic quality of their work is perhaps less outlandish than one might think. It is surely not unreasonable to suggest that the individual with more than a passing interest in cinema will have certain favourite directors and that these types of preferences tend to be reflected in popular film criticism. Even in academia such evaluations continue to be made, albeit covertly, manifesting themselves in what has been described as cultish behaviour whereby enthusiasm for a director may often lead to excessive attention being paid to their obviously inferior works, something that may find expression in mandatory course viewing lists (Tyler, 1970).

Yet while it is clear that the excesses of postmodern theory do not provide any great assistance to the discipline focused collection manager, collection specialists such as Scholtz avoid any meaningful engagement with film theory with claims such as that there is “substantial agreement” on those works of suitable importance for inclusion in a film collection and that their significance is “based on the quality of their work” (Scholtz, 2002, p.250). Such claims are highly questionable and run counter to most contemporary film or cultural studies theory. He makes another rather bold, and equally dubious, claim when he suggests that film festival awards and other prizes represent a critical consensus and can therefore be considered reliable indicators of a film’s quality (p.251). Yet to return to the point made by Rosenbaum in the previous chapter (that the combination of the rise of cultural studies and the formalist reaction against the auteur theory and evaluation in the faculty were chief contributors to academia’s decision to abstain from evaluation and canon formation) the disappearance of film criticism from academia seemed to occur at,

ostensibly, an entirely arbitrary point in history insofar global cinema is concerned. The fallout from the academy's departure from critical pursuits following an intensive period of legitimising the Hollywood picture as an object of genuine aesthetic value was that the void was simply filled by the Hollywood film industry and commercial American film culture. This prompted the subsequent dominance by Hollywood of canon formation, giving "the industry an unchallenged playing field, assisted by such recent promotional campaigns (2007) as the American Film Institute's various poles" (ctd. in Long, 2006, p.24). Long claims that Hollywood has created a homogenised film culture with critics often fulfilling the role of promotional mouthpiece for the studios (Long, 2006, p.17). His argument is that this has been facilitated by academia's role in developing a Hollywood canon and thereby legitimising it before abstaining from further overt critical activities.

Evidence of the residual effects of the academic canon in wider culture is visible elsewhere. In an article decrying the increasingly static nature of the *Sight and Sound* Top 10 Sallitt laments the lack of a presence of films produced post-1980 on the list, deducing a lack of development in the list between 1982 and 2002 (Sallitt, 2002). Interestingly, the genesis of the staid canon corresponds with reports on the emergence of postmodern relativism and cultural analysis in film studies and the decline of academic evaluation (1980s). Martin argues that the best of list is not merely a "de facto canon" as Schrader claims but that can be a legitimate canon (Martin, 2001). He differentiates the canon from the list on the basis that although both might germinate from mere personal preference the canon is legitimised by a consensus. He too observes a static and middle-brow consensus in current canons, again hinting at the suggestion that this may be attributable to the lack of serious academic involvement in canon formation. Two types of canon prevail in his view. The first is the populist canon which he dubs the "Star Wars Canon" and tends to be based on commercial success. The second is the classical canon which he terms the "Citizen Kane Canon" which is the type that is comprised of classics based on received wisdom and notions of good taste. Both lack any significant theoretical underpinning and both perpetuate middlebrow, dominant ideologies. To counter the hegemony of these canons he recommends an alternative method. Acknowledging that in this information age definitive lists are impossible to compile, he recommends taking a polemical and pedagogical approach to canon formation. He argues that one can expand existing canons by presenting alternative lists based on niche and transgressive materials. Such lists cannot be considered definitive barometers of aesthetic worth but could generate consensus and thereby perhaps

prompt canonical expansion. Rather than acting as a guide to the best materials in film it would simply act as a guide to alternative, overlooked but “worthwhile” objects.

Such a viewpoint is endorsed by Nayar (Nayar, 2009). Her argument is based on a similar acceptance of the reality that canons are not definitive. However, they can be influential and effective and she suggests that rather than abstaining from canon formation entirely that film studies teachers and theorists should consciously strive to develop new canons with overtly polemical and pedagogical underpinnings. Martin also reiterated this argument in an article with James Naremore (Martin and Naremore, 2003) where they recommended that it would be better for academia to take an alternative approach to canon formation in light of the knowledge that they can never be truly definitive rather than abstaining from the practice of evaluation altogether. They feel that academia’s inactivity has lead to the current state of a “safe consolidation of what is known, a certain kind of consensus” (p.123). Just as it is beyond doubt that film studies is no longer concerned with evaluation, similarly it is obvious that its previous evaluative activities have legitimised current consensus.

Chapter 4

The four sample canons

As mentioned in the introduction, the selection of the four lists was based on the interpretations that could be made from their underlying philosophies and ideologies.

Paul Schrader's List

Schrader presented his list in an article decrying the decline of evaluative art and film canons. The list is presented as a deliberately elitist and esoteric selection of the films that "artistically defined film history" based on a Romantic set of aesthetic criteria (Schrader, 2006, p.35). Schrader took his leave from Bloom's approach to the revival of the literary canon which was a deliberately provocative reaction to the culturally focused and politicised nature of literary academia and Schrader's canon also challenges the present "non-judgemental" nature of academia. But it is also presented as a scholarly imbued alternative to the proliferation of best-of lists based on little more than personal preference (p.40). According to Laura Mulvey, "No list can hope to do more than capture the level of research and aesthetic spirit of its time" (ctd. in Martin, 2001) and this is a warning that Schrader heeds, justifying his selection on the basis of the lists inherent acknowledgement of its own temporal nature (it is a canon only of twentieth century cinema).

Schrader also employs a systematic set of aesthetic criteria in his evaluation.

Schrader makes his selections according to those films that meet all seven of his criteria:

- Beauty
- Strangeness
- Unity of form and subject matter
- Tradition
- Repeatability
- Viewer engagement
- Morality

Without analysing each of the requirements it is clear that they point towards an analysis of film as high art. One of the underlying themes of Schrader's article is that some films are more worthy of analysis than others. While cultural studies might prompt the study of what he considers to be "trash" (suggesting *The Matrix* and *Lord of the Rings*) on the basis of their cultural significance this should not become the prevailing purpose of film studies.

While sympathising with the pleading of minority causes in the academy Schrader feels that such culturally focused disciplines should not automatically dictate that evaluation become taboo.

...just as the canon is not about commerce, neither is it about national identity or political correctness. There's no reason to balance money-losing films with commercially successful ones. Neither is there a reason to apportion canonical status according to year of release or country of origin. Film history, like art history, has fat and lean years, productive and fallow cultural environments. Genre and subject matter don't matter; nor do the age, race, and sex of the filmmakers. Such factors enrich the discussion; they don't define it. There is no equal-opportunity canon (p.47).

On this evidence it would seem logical to categorise Schrader's list as an "elitist" canon.

Sight and Sound Critics' Poll 2002

The Sight and Sound Critics' Poll is compiled every ten years from the votes by submitted by 145 prominent film critics. The list is ostensibly based on personal preference with no criteria specified by the magazine. The list is popularly perceived to carry significant critical weight both by its association with a prestigious, highbrow magazine and the fact that the sample of critics chosen to vote is seen to marry the gap between the two poles of film criticism – academia and popular criticism (Martin and Naremore, 2002, p.122) – with critics ranging from psychoanalytic theorist Slavoj Zizek to BBC radio critic Mark Kermode.

The most recent list came under criticism for its failure to reflect cinema since 1980 (Sallitt, 2002) and for being too reflective of perceived academic notions of good taste (Solomons, 2002). Looking specifically at film canons, both Wexman and Staiger have argued that canons will inevitably be ideologically and politically endowed given that they are products of particular cultural circumstances (Staiger, 1985; Wexman, 1986). From such a perspective the list failed to reflect a broader culture than the tastes of white bourgeois academia Solomons posits and the perceived highbrow prestige of the magazine (it is seen to straddle the void between popular criticism and theory) may impose a pressure on the contributors (whose selections are visible on the BFI website) to adhere to prevailing notions of quality.

This list is categorised as a "critical" canon.

AFI 100 Years...100 Movies

The AFI list is compiled from the votes of a sample of 1500 American critics, artists and other professionals active in the film industry. The voters select from a list of 400 nominated films what they consider to be the 100 most important. The AFI recommended that the jurors base their decisions on the following criteria (AFI, 2007):

Critical Recognition

Formal commendation in print, television and digital media.

Major Award Winner

Recognition from competitive events including awards from peer groups, critics, guilds and major film festivals.

Popularity Over Time

Including success at the box office, television and cable airings, and DVD/VHS sales and rentals.

Historical Significance

A film's mark on the history of the moving image through visionary narrative devices, technical innovation or other groundbreaking achievements.

Cultural Impact

A film's mark on American society in matters of style and substance.

Rosenbaum vehemently criticised the list for what he perceived as being an attempt to consolidate Hollywood's hegemony. He argued that the narrow parameters of the list and its presentation as an object of critical endowment meant that it overlooked many more worthy inclusions. Like the *Sight and Sound* list Rosenbaum felt that the process of compilation carried with it implicit pressures, namely to affirm the importance of major Hollywood cinema (Rosenbaum, 1997).

Consequently this list has been categorised as an "industry" canon.

Empire 500 Greatest Movies

This list was published by the mainstream British film magazine *Empire*. It was compiled without any overarching criteria other than the personal preference of a sample

set of 50 critics, 150 industry professionals and 10,000 readers of the magazine. Therefore this list has been categorised as a “populist” canon.

Chapter 5

Primary Research

In total there were 196 films spread across all four lists with the following number of films in each list:

AFI's 100 Years...100 Movies (Referred to heretofore as AFI)	100
Empire's Greatest Movies of All Time (Referred to heretofore as Empire)	50
Paul Schrader's Canon of 20 th Century Cinema (Referred to heretofore as Schrader)	60
Sight and Sound Critics Poll 2002 (Referred to heretofore as Sight and Sound)	60

There were some visible similarities between the canons. AFI and Empire shared 29 films, AFI and Sight and Sound 17 while AFI and Schrader shared only 13. Empire and Schrader included ten of the same films, while Empire and Sight and Sound shared 14. Schrader and Sight and Sound contained 19 of the same films. One can detect certain alignments from this brief analysis with almost 60% of the films in Empire featuring on AFI and with approximately one third of both Sight and Sound's and Schrader's contents being identical.

Most of the sample lists do tend to have an individual flavour as the majority of films on each list feature only on that list (31 on Sight and Sound, 62 on AFI, 36 Schrader) with Empire being the exception featuring only 15 unique titles.

The bar charts below (figs. D-J) illustrate the number of films from the 196 canonical works represented in each of the sample university catalogues. The list of catalogues in order of canonical adherence is as follows:

1. UCC – 140 Films
2. TCD – 131 Films
3. NUIM – 114 Films
4. NUIG – 96 Films
5. UCD – 94 Films
6. DCU – 91 Films
7. UL – 21 Films

Fig. D

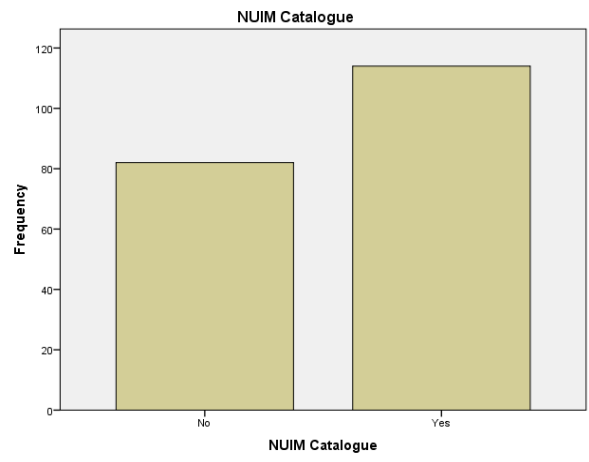


Fig. E

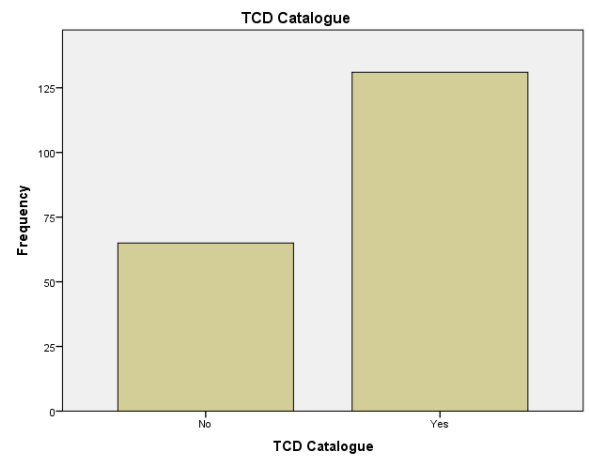


Fig. F

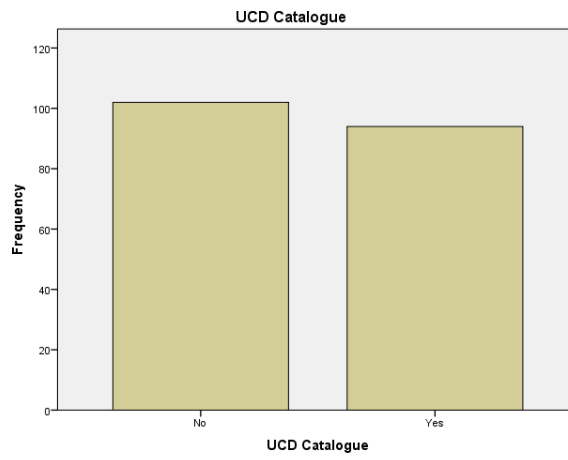


Fig. G

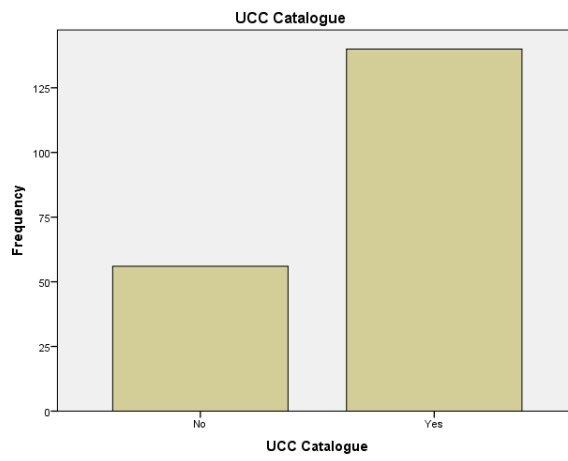


Fig. H

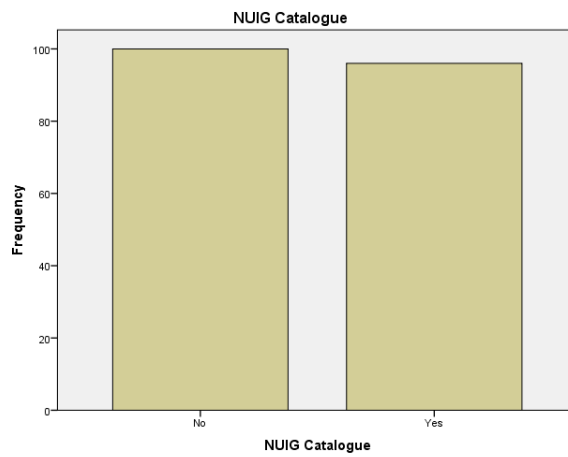


Fig. I

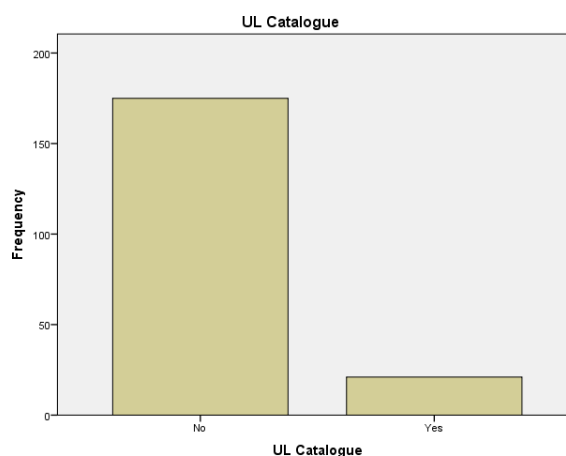
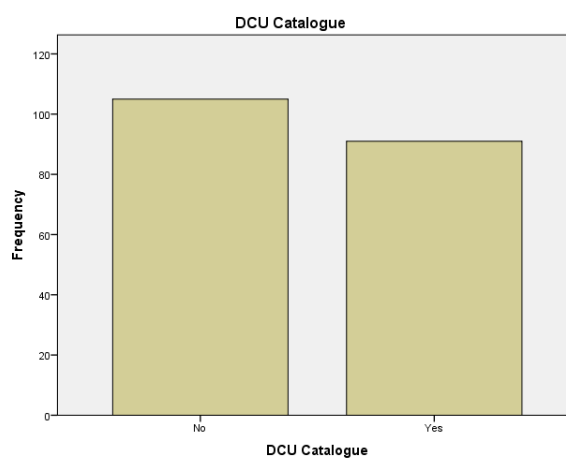


Fig. J



The following tables break down the representation of each canon in each catalogue according to the number of films from each list in the catalogue and the percentage of the total number of films from each list. The mean percentage of the overall representation of the canon in each catalogue is also provided below each table.

AFI	No. of Films	Representation Of Canon
NUIM	64	64%
TCD	70	70%
UCD	55	55%
UCC	77	77%
NUIG	54	54%
UL	11	11%
DCU	49	49%

Mean Percentage - 54%

Empire	No. of Films	Representation Of Canon
NUIM	39	78%
TCD	34	68%
UCD	31	62%
UCC	38	76%
NUIG	28	56%
UL	11	22%
DCU	28	56%

Mean Percentage - 59.71%

Schrader	No. of Films	Representation Of Canon
NUIM	30	50%
TCD	43	71.7%
UCD	23	38.3%
UCC	44	73.3%
NUIG	28	46.7%
UL	6	10%
DCU	22	36.7%

Mean Percentage - 46.671%

Sight and Sound	No. of Films	Representation Of Canon
NUIM	41	68.3%
TCD	52	86.7%
UCD	32	53.3%
UCC	51	85%
NUIG	39	65%
UL	7	11.7%
DCU	40	66.7%

Mean Percentage - 62.385%

Evidently Sight and Sound is the best represented, followed by Empire, then AFI and finally Schrader. However, it is evident that the UL catalogue is something of an anomaly with the four canons very much under represented. Therefore if one removes the UL statistics and recalculates, the mean representation of each canon is as follows:

AFI – 61.5%

Empire – 66%

Schrader – 52.7%

Sight and Sound – 70.83%

Clearly the order of representation remains the same although their representation within the remaining six catalogues does appear more significant.

There is no single overarching trend visible in the libraries' collections of canonical works. At UCC, where the catalogue is best represented there tends to be a relatively even spread in the representation of each canon, ranging from 73.3% of Schrader to 85% of Sight and Sound. Similar patterns are evident at DCU and NUIG with Schrader and Sight and Sound representing the two extremities of representation. However, there is a suggestion of an emergence of the polarities of the elitist and populist canons at TCD, NUIM and UCD. At UCD and NUIM the best represented canon is Empire with Schrader being the least represented. The opposite is true at TCD where Schrader is the most prevalent and Empire the least thus perhaps indicating a conflict between a populist and elitist approach to collection management.

There are five films held in all seven catalogues. They are:

1. Blade Runner
2. Some Like it Hot
3. Casablanca
4. West Side Story
5. The Dead

Interestingly, none of the above films feature on every canon. *Blade Runner*, *Some Like it Hot*, *Casablanca* and *West Side Story* are all absent from Schrader. Conversely, *The Dead* features only in Schrader. *West Side Story* and *Casablanca* are also absent from Sight and Sound and nor does *West Side Story* feature on Empire. Nevertheless, clearly each film does have some level of canonical endorsement. One might also be inclined to attribute the presence of *The Dead* in university catalogues to the director John Huston and surmise that his status as an honorary Irishman may have played a part in its ubiquity.

There are thirteen films that are not available at any university and each is mentioned on only one best of list. The table below lists all thirteen films along with their corresponding canonical endorsement.

The Story of the Late Chrysanthemums	Sight and Sound
The Travelling Players	Schrader
Salvatore Giuliano	Schrader
Seven Men From Now	Schrader
The Naked Spur	Schrader
High and Low	Schrader
Back to the Future	Empire
Evil Dead 2	Empire
The Dark Knight	Empire
Rocky	AFI
Tootsie	AFI
Yankee Doodle Dandy	AFI
In the Heat of the Night	AFI

From this table one can also infer that sixty of the sixty one films on Sight and Sound are represented in library university catalogues, 55 of the sixty films listed by Schrader, forty seven of the fifty from Empire List and 96 out of AFI.

Six films featured on all four lists (*Taxi Driver*, *Vertigo*, *Singin in the Rain*, *The Godfather*, *2001* and *Citizen Kane*) and ten films feature on three lists. A list of the ten films follows with the name of list from which they were absent in brackets:

- Chinatown (Sight and Sound)
- Psycho (Schrader)
- Godfather Part II (Schrader)
- Blade Runner (Schrader)
- Some Like it Hot (Schrader)
- Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans (List)
- The General (Empire)
- City Lights (Empire)
- The Searchers (Empire)
- The Third Man (AFI)

Of the six films that feature in all four canons three of the libraries stock all six films (NUIM, TCD, UCC). Of the remaining four institutions NUIG stocks five of the ubiquitous films, excluding only *2001*. UCD does not include either *Singin in the Rain* or *2001*, nor does DCU. Of the six films, UL includes only *Singin in the Rain* and *2001*.

The table below captures the representation of the ten films that feature on three of the lists in the catalogues under analysis with Y indicating their presence and N their absence:

	NUIM	TCD	UCD	UCC	NUIG	UL	DCU
Psycho	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y
Godfather Part II	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
Some Like it Hot	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Blade Runner	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Chinatown	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y
City Lights	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N
Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N
The General	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
The Searchers	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
The Third Man	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y

Given the that UL holds only a very small proportion of the canonical films it would be worth examining those films that feature in all but one catalogue. Twenty four films feature on the other six catalogues:

1. Rashomon
2. A Bout de Souffle
3. L'Atalante
4. La Dolce Vita
5. Barry Lyndon
6. Ivan the Terrible
7. Bicycle Thieves
8. Pierrot le Fou
9. The Battle of Algiers
10. Jules et Jim
11. La Regle du Jeu
12. Seven Samurai
13. The 400 Blows
14. The Maltese Falcon
15. Easy Rider
16. The Searchers
17. On the Waterfront
18. Apocalypse Now
19. Psycho
20. Godfather 2
21. Citizen Kane
22. Godfather
23. Vertigo
24. Taxi Driver

Interestingly, of the 24 films fifteen are included in AFI, 13 in Empire, 9 in Schrader and 21 in Sight and Sound. One can infer considerable overlap given that the total number of canonical recommendations is 58, over twice the number of films, which might be interpreted as evidence of a critical consensus.

A further 35 films feature in five catalogues:

1. The Leopard
2. Orphée
3. 8 1/2
4. Mr Smith Goes to Washington
5. Double Indemnity
6. Bonnie and Clyde
7. North by Northwest
8. Unforgiven
9. Lawrence of Arabia
10. The Wild Bunch
11. Raging Bull
12. Wild Strawberries
13. The Seventh Seal
14. Andrei Rublev
15. Annie Hall
16. Spartacus
17. Sunset Boulevard
18. The Apartment
19. Goodfellas
20. Pulp Fiction
21. M
22. La Grande Illusion
23. Star Wars (ep. 5)
24. The Third Man
25. Star Wars (ep. 4)
26. Metropolis
27. Titanic
28. Man with a Movie Camera
29. Talk to Her
30. An American in Paris
31. High Noon
32. One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest
33. The Treasure of the Sierra Madre
34. Do the Right Thing
35. Schindler's List

Interestingly, here the total number of recommendations is 49 (AFI 21, Empire 9, Schrader 9, Sight and Sound 10) which suggests a thinning of the critical consensus. Similarly, if one looks at the fifty one films represented in two university libraries or less a similar trend emerges:

1. Swing Time
2. Sansho Dayu
3. The Sixth Sense
4. Pickpocket
5. M-A-S-H
6. Greed
7. The Crowd
8. All that Jazz
9. Masculin-Feminin
10. To Kill a Mocking Bird
11. The Goldrush
12. The Mirror
13. Nostalgia
14. The Lady Eve
15. Saving Private Ryan
16. Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?
17. Heat - AFI
18. Sophie's Choice –Empire
19. The Big Lebowski
20. Ben Hur
21. The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance
22. Shanghai Express
23. Mother and Son
24. Network
25. Au hasard Balthazar
26. Gun Crazy
27. Claire's Knee
28. In the Mood for Love
29. Sweet Smell of Success
30. Letter From an Unknown Woman
31. The Passion of Joan of Arc
32. Bringing Up Baby
33. Crimes and Misdemeanours
34. Earth
35. A Place in the Sun
36. Performance
37. This is Spinal Tap
38. American Graffiti

39. Toy Story
40. Terminator 2: Judgement Day
41. Raiders of the Lost Ark
42. Ordet
43. Two or Three Things I know about Her
44. The Life of Oharu
45. The Sound of Music
46. The African Queen
47. The Last Picture Show
48. Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid
49. That Obscure Object of Desire
50. Fight Club
51. Snow White

The breakdown of canonical representation is as follows:

- AFI – 18
- Empire – 7
- Schrader – 22
- Sight and Sound – 9

Clearly these are mostly films upon which there is little critical consensus with the total recommendations numbering 56 thereby only allowing for an overlap on a maximum of five films.

Discussion

Chapter 6

6.1

Although all four lists are ideologically inflected there is a common thread underpinning them – they are all ostensibly lists compiled with the expressed purpose of representing the best/most important films according to certain criteria (aesthetic value, personal preference, historical significance etc.). And certainly the presence of a majority of the total of 196 films in a majority of the seven library catalogues would suggest that these lists do offer some representation of what is considered to be the most valuable information in cinema at Irish universities. Unfortunately the statistical analysis does not provide any enlightenment into whether or not collections are compiled on the basis of their aesthetic values or their cultural significance. Furthermore, even after a cross examination of the statistics with the qualitative data gleaned from the analysis of the lists themselves there is a danger of attaching too great an importance to the perceived philosophical basis of each list. For example, because the library at NUIM includes a greater representation of films from the “populist” Empire list than any other, can one necessarily infer that the stated mission of the collection is to cater to student demand rather than provide them with high value content? Perhaps, however the evidence for such an assessment is tenuous. As Mast (Mast, 1985) has warned, such an approach attributes too great an importance to the inferences of the analyst or critic. In other words, by making such an assumption we could be undermining the motivations of the collection manager? While one might be inclined on the basis of this evidence to pursue a line of enquiry that would seek to affirm whether or not the film collection at NUIM does seek to facilitate students’ Saturday night entertainment, as Bergman suggested, or whether this collection indicated a more populist approach to film studies in Irish academia, the statistical evidence alone is glaringly insufficient. It would need to be corroborated by a more systematic qualitative analysis of the titles held within the collection and the roles of library and faculty staff in the process of selection and acquisitions. Although the a priori inferences that are facilitated by the ideological and philosophical implications of the lists do provide some insight they ultimately allow only a limited scope for the evaluation of the motivation behind collection development.

It would also appear that collection evaluations can only evaluate the intrinsic value of the information that they hold within the context of how they will be used. Therefore not

only does the subject librarian need to question the value of films but also their potential use by library patrons. For example, in Staiger's article *Hitchcock in Texas* (Staiger, 2000) she draws on Noel Carroll's theory of allusion (Carroll, 1982) as a cinematic technique in order to justify her enjoyment of and enthusiasm for the film *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* as a film academic through its deliberate invocation of Hitchcock's "Psycho" and her capacity as an intertextually aware viewer to recognize these references. This, in turn, elevates her enjoyment of the film to what might be considered to be a more cerebral plane than that of the exploitation and genre enthusiasts who may have enjoyed the piece on a literal, single-coded level. What this illustrates is how alternative meanings and values can be attributed to the same object, simply depending on the user group. Similarly, the celebrated *Battle of Algiers*, a film with an overtly anti-imperialist message, is famously known to be shown to American marines as a training video for combating urban guerrilla forces in US overseas military activities. Furthermore, in the study carried out by Walters on the process of video acquisitions at his library he includes a list of the departments that made the most requests for films. In order of frequency of requests the lists of departments is as follows:

1. Sociology
2. Global Studies
3. Gender Studies
4. Music
5. English

The significance of these statistics is that if each of the films from the Empire list that appeared in the NUIM catalogue had not been selected to support a curriculum then perhaps the initial prognosis (that the collection's development was driven by a populist agenda) would appear more valid. However, there are multiple (though not infinite) potential uses for the films. A film or media studies or even a sociology course may use one of the films as a demonstration of a particular social phenomenon, or it might perhaps provide an example of a film made by a member of a particular minority or ethnic group. Alternatively, it may be the reception of the film rather than the film itself that is the subject under analysis. One must ask what pedagogical role do film collections play in the academic library? Are they simply artefacts of popular culture that furnish cultural studies students with the primary sources to support their research (Van Fleet, 2003, p.67)? Dyki is of the position that they are:

...a core academic cinema collection cannot simply mirror “best of lists” or Oscar winners and nominees or even the list of titles government agencies wish to preserve. A core collection needs to be more global, more inclusive and more varied than a general cinema collection. Culture is made up of the good the bad, the ugly and the obscure (Dyki, 2002, p.216)

Or should such collections contribute to the development of critical thinking skills as Wilder and Walker propose. This alternative, elitist approach is advocated by Walters (Walters, 2003) who cites the three criteria that he uses for the selection of films as “aesthetic appeal”, “authenticity” and “uniqueness” thus demonstrating a remarkable similarity with the criteria of the Romantic Victorian art critics.

This is not to suggest that a collection cannot do both but one might assume that an institution’s collection development policy would privilege one method over another. Without sufficient data from the questionnaires or the details of how the films were selected, making a definitive assessment is simply not possible. Consequently, while certain of the trends, such as TCD’s favouring of Schrader’s selections and its relative underrepresentation of films from the Empire list and UCD and NUIM taking the opposite approach, suggest a polarisation of a populist and elitist (or want and need) approaches, ultimately such interpretations merely provide a springboard for further research.

However, it is interesting to note that of the films included on the Wikipedia page dedicated to the “List of films considered the worst” or the “bottom 10” of the IMDB “Bottom 100” none are included in any of the libraries’ collections. The majority of the films are available on DVD (some only in the NTSC format) and one would assume that they would be of considerable cultural significance. It was somewhat surprising to find that neither *Plan 9 from Outer Space* nor *Battleship Earth* featured in a collection. On such, admittedly slight, evidence one might infer that libraries and faculties do employ some conventional aesthetic evaluative criteria to collections although whether or not such an approach extends to development policies is unclear.

As mentioned above, those films on which there tends to be a critical consensus (represented by an appearance on more than one list) are also among the best represented while those films that feature on only one list are, conversely, underrepresented. Again, without an examination of the pedagogical roles that these films fulfil in the university, the underlying motivations or ideologies of the collections remain obscured. Yet one could still

legitimately infer a unity of tastes and evaluations in Irish academic institutions (with the exception of UL). To return to Karras's model, what this indicates is that there is evidence of a consensus on the best materials simply on the basis of inclusion. Augmented by critical consensus evidence of a canon emerges.

6.2

The concept of knowledge migration proposed by Karras has been recognised across the literature on the management of interdisciplinary collections. Bodi and Maier-O'Shea discourage collection managers from simply building collections in response to curricular needs given the malleability of course reading lists from year to year (Bodi and Maier-O'Shea, 2005, p.144). Alsop carried out a survey of the managers of popular contemporary fiction collections at a sample set of several US university libraries and found that, although the majority of libraries did give "first preference" to "canonical" works there was, once again, a consensus that a blind adherence to faculty needs in developing collections was both unwise and impractical (Alsop, 2007, p.584). Alsop observes in her study a desire amongst collection managers to include what was perceived to be "high quality" (p.584) popular fiction, citing a general preference for "Phillip K. Dick and James Elroy – rather than Candice Bushnell" (ibid). This illustrates a rather arbitrary preference for what one might consider more traditionally "masculine" genres, science fiction and noir fiction, than the more feminine genre of the romantic novel which provokes questions of the political and ideological underpinning of American academic institutions' library collections. Yet, ignoring this interesting outcome of Alsop's research for a moment, it is her explanation for such preferences that is perhaps of more interest for this particular project. She writes that, "...while the concept of a canon may have disappeared from most English departments, there are lingering effects in terms of our ongoing attempts to create a collection that reflects the best of the literary world" (ibid). Is something similar in evidence in the Irish university libraries' inclusion of a mean average of 62.385% (70.83% excluding UL) of the films from the apparently academically inflected *Sight and Sound Critics' Poll*.

In Brian Quinn's oft cited analysis of the role of the literary canon in the academic library (Quinn, 1994) he warns against a dogmatic adherence to canons in the development of a collection on two main points of principle. Firstly, if we are to accept that a canon can offer an ideologically imbued snapshot of cultural memory then a blind devotion to the canon carries with it a danger of perpetuating dominant ideologies (p.5). Doherty, drawing

on Quinn's work, makes a very similar argument. To illustrate his point Doherty cites a passage from Umberto Eco's novel, *In the Name of the Rose*, where a librarian hides a book that, although full of intellectually valuable information, challenges the hegemonic canon which corresponds with his own ideology (Doherty, 1998, p.404). This is the danger of the canon, that it simply reflects the "elitism and exclusivity" (ibid) of a discipline. If canons remain static and fail to become inclusive then their ideological underpinning causes them to become exclusive as they become representative of the values of an arbitrary, bygone era.

Quinn's second point is that purely canonical collections can serve to dull students' capacity for critical thinking (p.5). Doherty takes up this argument, positing that if the academic library really is an arena for facilitating critical thinking (a position upon which there is some consensus between the information literacy proponents and the discipline specialists) then surely its "true historical responsibility" (Doherty, 1998, p.404) is facilitating exploration outside of the canon and thereby potentially adding to it from the wealth of infinite, positive and collected knowledge in existence. Canonical indoctrination simply "anaesthetizes" students, rendering them "ambassadors of the status quo" (Quinn, 1994, p.5). This conclusion is based on an assumption of fairly typical human behaviour whereby one is less likely to be critical of a canonical text than to attribute one's lack of appreciation to one's own critical deficiencies. These constraints are generally removed when one encounters a non-canonical text outside of the library (p.7). Therefore this type of behaviour, allied with purely canonical collections, "inhibits the development of a critical consciousness" (McClaren ctd. in Quinn p.5). Quinn argues that holding non-canonical items and works that challenge the hegemony of the canon in an academic library's collection grants them legitimacy by association. For example including an Alan Moore graphic novel in a library's literature collection might serve to break down any prejudices a burgeoning researcher may have concerning its legitimacy as a subject of academic research. It breaks down the barriers between canonical consensus and collected knowledge and serves to facilitate critical thinking.

In spite of both Doherty and Quinn's reservations concerning static canons, both do endorse the existence of canons (albeit in a fluid, democratic and inclusive form). They also consider their endurance to be inevitable for the simple reason that they impose some level of order on the information plethora. They do this by acting as guides to library users (Doherty, 1998, p.405; Quinn, 1996, pp.2-3). The library also needs to provide access to

canons for the more pragmatic reason that “...in the Humanities the canon is inherent since the structure of the discipline is based on the examination of canonical works” (Doherty, 1998, p.404). Both authors are simply arguing for libraries taking an active role in expanding the canons and facilitating knowledge migration.

Conclusion

Is there evidence to support the supposition that Irish university libraries develop and perpetuate film canons in the development of their film collections?

The analysis would appear to support the hypothesis that Irish university library catalogues do perpetuate canons. The triangulation of methodological approaches both affirmed a critical consensus amongst the four lists and measured this consensus against the homogeneity in library collections. According to the criteria that were defined in the introduction, a canon is a collection of the most “important” works in a particular field. Importance, for the purposes of this study, was defined by the prevalence of a work in library catalogues (consensus) and underlined by a corresponding critical consensus on the value of the work. And as the data analysis demonstrated, any film that featured in more than one of the sample canons featured in at least one Irish university library film collection.

But do libraries play a role in developing canons? The results gleaned from the qualitative secondary analysis would appear to indicate that they do not, however this summation remains inconclusive. Quinn took the polemic that presence in a library can “legitimise” a cultural or artistic object (Quinn, 1994, p.8). And a cursory glance at most university film collections would likely yield the researcher with films that remain outside of culturally dominant canons such as the *Sight and Sound Critics’ Poll*. As we have seen, this same poll has been noted for its static nature over the past 29 years. Yet the fact that this list was the one that, cumulatively, Irish university libraries most rigorously adhere to of the sample selected would suggest that Irish academia (and by extension university libraries) does tend to perpetuate a classical conception of the canon. Furthermore, its period of stasis corresponds with the rise of home video technology and open access library film collections. If we take the sample of collections analysed as a microcosm of global library film collections such collections do not appear to have had an effect on developing canons.

How does the information specialist define what constitutes the “most important” documents of information in the context of film collection management?

Ultimately, this can only be defined alongside a user focused analysis of collections. How films are used ultimately determines their value. A definitive conclusion based solely on a qualitative assessment of the film materials will not provide the collection manager with a reliable indicator of value. While the findings of this research project do not support a purely user focused approach to the assessment of collections it is clear that a collection focused approach is also insufficient and inconclusive.

Nevertheless, the prevalence of works from the four lists used in the analysis and the absence of any of the aforementioned critically derided yet culturally significant films from the catalogues does imply that at least some level of evaluation based on intrinsic aesthetic merit is employed by librarians and, perhaps, faculties in determining inclusion in a collection.

How does one define the purpose of the canon within the context of video collection management?

In the general context of collection management the purpose of the canon is not singular. As Karras pointed out, the canon consists of the most important works in a particular field and it will usually be reflected in the curriculum (Karras, 2007). Across interdisciplinary collections film canons such as those referenced in this project could reflect the implicit evaluations of the faculty in designing curricula. Yet they might also service wider cultural studies courses. Or alternatively they might simply convince the library of a film's inherent aesthetic or pedagogical worth to students.

Based on the secondary research one might surmise that the titles included in Schrader's Canon and the *Sight and Sound* Critics' Poll reflected more evaluative canons whereas the *Empire* and AFI lists embodied a wider cultural studies emphasis. Although the films included on the two former canons might well be analysed for their perceived cultural relevance there is a lingering suspicion that they might also owe their presence in a collection to a perception that they are "better" cultural objects. Yet it is highly unlikely that films such as *Tootsie*, *The Matrix* or *Evil Dead II*, all from the two latter lists, will be examined on the basis of their perceived aesthetic merits. The omission of a film such as *Evil Dead II* from library catalogues hints at implicit artistic standards in the film collections of Irish universities.

Canons, when imbued by an authority, affirm the significance of films and thereby prompt curricular and consequently collection development. The lists mentioned all keep films in the popular consciousness. This affirms their credentials as significant cultural artefacts. However, they can also, perhaps, allow films to sustain an exclusive prestige that might instigate their inclusion in the academic library.

Recommendations for further research

According to film critic Stephen Teo, a film canon will inevitably “impart a sense of what’s excluded from reading the ones that are included” (Teo, 2005). Similarly, this project perhaps raises as many questions as it ultimately answers.

There have been several deliberate oversights in the research which are attributable to a variety of factors, principally logistics. Firstly, this thesis has ignored the reality that in universities there are usually a number of separate, overlapping and disparate departmental film collections held apart from the main library collection (Lonergan, 2009, pp.188-189). This is primarily for the reason that this thesis examined films as part of “recreational collections” as well as being for dedicated coursework. The reality of a departmental collection is that many of the films it contains will be inaccessible to students not in the department (i.e. most students). As Dimmock states, “for this generation the boundary between pleasure reading and pleasure viewing and information seeking for scholarly pursuit may be a construct of library politics and budgets” (Dimmock, 2007, pp.143-144). In other words, the library can legitimise an object as being educationally worthy simply by including it in its collection even though the library’s decision may be based on a rather arbitrary premise. One of the motivations for this thesis was determining what those politics were and attempting to find out whether such decisions had residual effects in broader culture

Secondly, although a more detailed qualitative analysis of the films would have been instructive it was simply not logistically possible within the timeframe provided. Nor could a logical sampling method be determined that would support the methodological process of the project. Similarly, how “canonical” collections really are can only truly be determined in the context of the library’s wider film collection. Again, across a sample population of more than one university such an approach would have been logistically impossible and an analysis of just one collection would have been unlikely to yield a great deal of worthwhile information on its own. However, this thesis provides a preliminary report on the role of film canons in library film collections that could support a more detailed qualitative case study of a library’s film collection.

Two further areas that were not broached were questions of format and supporting film materials (books, journals etc). To take the latter point first, Quinn presents an argument for taking a postmodern perspective in relation to including popular culture objects such as films in the collection. He argues that, faced with the impossibility of including everything, the library should exercise a level of “selectivity and discrimination”

and perhaps draw the line at acquiring overtly populist items (the example he gives are *Batman* and *Donald Duck* comics) (Quinn, 1994, p.8). Rather, he recommends including the potentially more intellectually rewarding theoretical analyses of such items, particularly given that the student is likely to encounter the object of popular culture itself outside of the library in any case. An analysis of films and film theory in collections could prove illuminating. Secondly, although it was indicated in the literature review that film collections were largely immune from the vagaries of digitisation and the formation of canons of accessibility, in the wider context of film it has been noted that collections are still driven by availability according to distribution (Scholtz, 2002, p.246). Several of the collections analysed continue to house VHS collections and this possibly indicates why some collections are wider than others and might explain the omission of certain films from a majority of catalogues. This element of collection management also presents a worthwhile area for research.

Ultimately this project should have demonstrated that there is significant evidence to suggest that film canons do play a role in Irish academic libraries and that academia has and continues to play a role in canon formation despite its shirking of its evaluation responsibilities. This thesis should provide useful support to further research into the role of the canon in the university library.

Self reflection on own learning and performance

At the beginning of the research process I prepared an overview of my proposed topic for my supervisor. Within the proposal/introduction I made the following statement regarding a scholarly article that I had encountered in the course of my preliminary research which I felt reflected a slightly distasteful and unproductive side of contemporary library and information studies literature:

This expediency is, unfortunately, indicative of much library and information management literature in that many disciplines within the profession appear to be founded on the principles of risk management and place an unhealthy emphasis on justifying the position of the library. Such a perspective calls to mind the Michael Douglas film *Falling Down* where the protagonist, a sociopathic, middle aged man who is in the process of a prolonged nervous breakdown, takes out his grievances on legitimate targets of society with a blackly comic excess. In one particularly resonant scene Douglas's character, armed with a bazooka, berates the road workers on a Los Angeles highway for the city corporation's desire to justify its annual budget by carrying out needless road works thereby ensuring that the entire budget is used and justified for future years. Bergman's statement appears to endorse a similar view of film in the academic library seemingly expressing an oft cited concern of librarianship, that is to keep libraries "relevant" (Netherby, 2007, p. 5). This thesis will strive to avoid such unedifying self-justification.

It was this encounter that determined the direction that this project took. Although the pragmatism and expediency expressed in the article in question offended my sensibilities as a researcher, the article was actually of considerable benefit to me in several ways. Firstly, it instilled in me a strong desire to avoid falling into the trap of presenting a piece of work that towed the party line of keeping library's "relevant". It focused my research on a subject that I felt was of both theoretical relevance and practical importance and which was most definitely not imbued with the expediency of the offending article. If this project could be considered to be propagating a polemic then it is surely that film, or any other "recreational" resource, should not be considered exempt from contributing to the library's overall pedagogical responsibilities. If the academic library is a service then surely its aim should be to provide the best service possible rather justifying its position. With this in mind, I was adamant that the research project that I presented should contribute to developing knowledge in the area of library and information management.

In the process of conducting the research for this project I came across the following quotation from 1949 by Henry Wriston, a former Brown University professor, on the value of non-curricular learning:

In a large and more genuine sense recreational reading is often the most truly educational, even the most really intellectual, element in experiences with and through books. It may well furnish an intellectual project within which the student establishes his own goals and determines his own significant values. It is the place where his tastes, aptitudes, and skills find freest play. Individual differences, recognition of which is the keynote of modern education, here come to richest fulfilment. It is precisely through independent reading that the task of knotting together the unravelled sleeve of information may best be achieved. Here the student's own philosophical structure takes form as a result of reading and reflection (qtd. in O'English et al., 2006, p.175).

It was upon encountering this statement that I felt that the project should take a, perhaps Utopian, perspective of asking how libraries can include the best information in their collections rather than the original focus of the research which was on overcoming the challenge of including "niche" materials in film collections.

Secondly, it actually transpired that in spite of the misgivings that I harboured I still referenced the offending article within the main body of work as it did provide a useful description of process. As the reader may have detected from this research project, I do harbour sympathies with the Romantic traditions valorised by Paul Schrader and the discipline focused approach to library instruction espoused by Walker (Walker, 2005) and Wilder (Wilder, 2006). With a background in Humanities research the systematic and methodological focus of the MSc process was alien to me. The focus placed on methodology and research methods often, I would suggest, at the expense of discipline focused learning, brought with it the challenges of adapting to a new, "scientific" learning process. Admittedly, I would confess that I do continue to harbour some suspicions about this potentially unbalanced approach. However, just as the article that had offended me so greatly proved, a methodological description of process can enhance a research project's value.

Additionally, the constraints of the MSc research process (dissertation structure etc.), while at times trying, were unquestionably beneficial in focusing the main research questions and in developing a piece of research that is, hopefully, of wider value. During the

early stages of the thesis I maintained a journal recording the research process. In a note from the 1st June I wrote:

...it should also be borne in mind that this piece of work should not simply be an example of theoretical naval gazing, as appealing and enjoyable as that might be. The decision to focus on postmodern theory must be taken because it offers a pre-existing language for tackling a practical facet of library studies. Postmodernism is not simply a metaphysical notion that feeds academia but it must be debated and discussed as a genuine social phenomenon of the 20th Century with an enduring presence in real life.

At this point I felt that there was a danger of the project become overly concerned with semiotics and other facets of film theory that, interesting as they might have been, contributed little on their own to answering the central research question. Thus, in spite of my misgivings, upon reflection I could undoubtedly appreciate the benefits of a systematic approach. Although I felt that within this project I addressed its central research questions adequately, the recommendations made clearly show that there were several alternative methodological approaches that could have been undertaken. While many of these approaches might have driven the project down an alternative route perhaps placing a greater emphasis on the methodological literature at the outset rather than the secondary subject literature may have allowed for a more illuminating conclusion.

Ultimately however, I feel that in spite of any oversights within the main body of the research project that the process of conducting the research gave me a greater appreciation for the theoretical underpinnings of research methods and philosophies.

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Appendix A

AFI 100 Years...100 Movies

CITIZEN KANE	MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON	WEST SIDE STORY	FORREST GUMP
THE GODFATHER	HIGH NOON	TAXI DRIVER	ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN
CASABLANCA	ALL ABOUT EVE	THE DEER HUNTER	MODERN TIMES
RAGING BULL	DOUBLE INDEMNITY	M*A*S*H	THE WILD BUNCH
SINGIN' IN THE RAIN	APOCALYPSE NOW	NORTH BY NORTHWEST	THE APARTMENT
GONE WITH THE WIND	THE MALTESE FALCON	JAWS	SPARTACUS
LAWRENCE OF ARABIA	THE GODFATHER PART II	ROCKY	SUNRISE
SCHINDLER'S LIST	ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST	THE GOLD RUSH	TITANIC
VERTIGO	SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS	NASHVILLE	EASY RIDER
THE WIZARD OF OZ	ANNIE HALL	DUCK SOUP	A NIGHT AT THE OPERA
CITY LIGHTS	THE BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI	SULLIVAN'S TRAVELS	PLATOON
THE SEARCHERS	THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES	AMERICAN GRAFFITI	12 ANGRY MEN
STAR WARS	THE TREASURE OF THE SIERRA MADRE	CABARET	BRINGING UP BABY
PSYCHO	DR. STRANGELOVE	NETWORK	THE SIXTH SENSE
2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY	THE SOUND OF MUSIC	THE AFRICAN QUEEN	SWING TIME
SUNSET BLVD.	KING KONG	RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK	SOPHIE'S CHOICE
THE GRADUATE	BONNIE AND CLYDE	WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?	GOODFELLAS
THE GENERAL	MIDNIGHT COWBOY	UNFORGIVEN	THE FRENCH CONNECTION
ON THE WATERFRONT	THE PHILADELPHIA STORY	TOOTSIE	PULP FICTION
IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE	SHANE	A CLOCKWORK ORANGE	THE LAST PICTURE SHOW
CHINATOWN	IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT	SAVING PRIVATE RYAN	DO THE RIGHT THING
SOME LIKE IT HOT	A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE	THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION	BLADE RUNNER
THE GRAPES OF WRATH	REAR WINDOW	BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID	YANKEE DOODLE DANDY
E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL	INTOLERANCE	THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS	TOY STORY
TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD	THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING	IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT	BEN-HUR

Empire 500 Greatest Movies (Top 50)

Seven Samurai	The Good The Bad And The Ugly
Evil Dead 2	The Lord Of The Rings: The Fellowship Of The Ring
This is Spinal Tap	Back to the Future
E.T.	Star Wars (ep 4)
On the Waterfront	The Third Man
Psycho	Blade Runner
Schindler's List	Godfather 2
The Big Lebowski	Casablanca
Kind Hearts And Coronets	Taxi Driver
The 400 Blows	2001: A Space Odyssey
Vertigo	The Dark Knight
The Matrix	Once Upon a Time in the West
Heat	Chinatown
A Clockwork Orange	The Apartment
Andrei Rublev	Raging Bull
Terminator 2: Judgement Day	Fight Club
The Lord Of The Rings: The Return Of The King	Pulp Fiction
Alien	Singin in the Rain
Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid	Apocalypse Now
Gone with the Wind	Goodfellas
Aliens	Jaws
Die Hard	The Shawshank Redemption
Citizen Kane	Star Wars (ep 5)
Some Like it Hot	Raiders of the Lost Ark
Dr Strangelove	Godfather

Sight and Sound Critics' Poll 2002

Citizen Kane	Le Mépris	The Seventh Seal
Vertigo	Pather Panchali	Taxi Driver
La Regle du Jeu	La Dolce Vita	The Third Man
The Godfather	M	Bicycle Thieves
Tokyo Story	The Story of the Late Chrysanthemums	Blade Runner
2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY	Barry Lyndon	City Lights
Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans	Les Enfants du Paradis	Greed
8 ½	Ivan the Terrible	Intolerance
Singin in the Rain	Man with a Movie Camera	Lawrence of Arabia
Seven Samurai	Metropolis	Letter from an Unknown Woman
The Searchers	Some Like it Hot	The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance
Rashomon	Ugetsu Monogatari	The Mirror
The Passion of Joan of Arc	Wild Strawberries	Ordet
A Bout de Souffle	Andrei Rublev	Pierrot le Fou
L'Atalante	The 400 Blows	Rio Bravo
The General	Fanny and Alexander	Sansho Dayu
Touch of Evil	La Grande Illusion	Shoah
Au hasard Balthazar	The Magnificent Ambersons	The Travelling Players
Jules et Jim	Modern Times	Two or Three Things I know about Her
L'Avventura	Psycho	Godfather Part II

Paul Schrader's List

La Regle du Jeu	Mother and Son	The Red Shoes
Tokyo Story	The Leopard	Singin in the Rain
City Lights	The Dead	Chinatown
Pickpocket	2001: A Space Odyssey	The Crowd
Metropolis	Last Year at Marienbad	Sunset Boulevard
Citizen Kane	The Passion of Joan of Arc	Talk to Her
Orphée	Jules et Jim	Shanghai Express
Masculin-Feminin	The Wild Bunch	Letter from an Unknown Woman
Persona	All that Jazz	Once Upon a Time in the West
Vertigo	The Life of Oharu	Salvatore Giuliano
Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans	High and Low	Nostalgia
The Searchers	Sweet Smell of Success	Seven Men From Now
The Lady Eve	That Obscure Object of Desire	Claire's Knee
The Conformist	An American in Paris	Earth
8 ½	The Battle of Algiers	Gun Crazy
Godfather	Taxi Driver	Out of the Past
In the Mood for Love	Fear Eats the Soul	Les Enfants du Paradis
The Third Man	Blue Velvet	The Naked Spur
Performance	Crimes and Misdemeanors	A Place in the Sun
La Notte	The Big Lebowski	The General

Appendix B

Films from the sample lists in the UCC Catalogue

City Lights	The Best Years of our Lives	La Regle du Jeu	Bicycle Thieves	Greed
Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans	Nashville	Alien	Pierrot le Fou	The Mirror
The General	The Silence of the Lambs	Aliens	The Crowd	Shoah
The Searchers	Shane	Die Hard	All that Jazz	Ordet
Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid	Platoon	Kind Hearts And Coronets	Masculin-Feminin	Two or Three Things I know about Her
The Shawshank Redemption	High Noon	The Good The Bad And The Ugly	Nostalgia	Le Mépris
Jaws	One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest	Star Wars (ep 5)	The Lady Eve	The Magnificent Ambersons
E.T.	The Treasure of the Sierra Madre	Andrei Rublev	The Conformist	L'Avventura
Dr Strangelove	Do the Right Thing	Seven Samurai	The Life of Oharu	Man with a Movie Camera
A Clockwork Orange	The Graduate	The 400 Blows	Claire's Knee	Rio Bravo
Schindler's List	A Night at the Opera	The Big Lebowski	In the Mood for Love	Touch of Evil
Gone With the Wind	All About Eve	Once Upon a Time in the West	Sweet Smell of Success	Wild Strawberries
Star Wars (ep 4)	The Deer Hunter	The Third Man	Out of the Past	The Seventh Seal
The Apartment	It Happened One Night	To Kill a Mocking Bird	Persona	M
Goodfellas	Midnight Cowboy	The Goldrush	Talk to Her	Rashomon
Pulp Fiction	Annie Hall	Saving Private Ryan	An American in Paris	A Bout de Souffle
Raging Bull	Spartacus	Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?	La Notte	L'Atalante
On the Waterfront	Mr Smith Goes to Washington	Ben Hur	Fear Eats the Soul	La Dolce Vita
Apocalypse Now	Double Indemnity	The Sound of Music	Blue Velvet	Barry Lyndon
Casablanca	Bonnie and Clyde	The African Queen	The Leopard	Ivan the Terrible
Psycho	Unforgiven	Godfather 2	Orphée	Jules et Jim

The Last Picture Show	North by Northwest	The Grapes of Wrath	The Battle of Algiers	Sullivan's Travels
Some Like it Hot	The Maltese Falcon	The Wizard of Oz	The Dead	The Wild Bunch
Blade Runner	Easy Rider	12 Angry Men	Letter From an Unknown Woman	Taxi Driver
2001: A Space Odyssey	West Side Story	Cabaret	The Passion of Joan of Arc	8 1/2
Singin in the Rain	Modern Times	Titanic	Tokyo Story	A Streetcar Named Desire
Citizen Kane	Intolerance	Bringing Up Baby	Les Enfants du Paradis	Sunset Boulevard
Godfather	Lawrence of Arabia	Duck Soup	Metropolis	Vertigo

Films from the sample lists in the TCD Catalogue

Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans	High Noon	Letter From an Unknown Woman	Touch of Evil	The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance
The General	One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest	The Passion of Joan of Arc	Wild Strawberries	Au hasard Balthazar
The Searchers	The Treasure of the Sierra Madre	Tokyo Story	The Seventh Seal	Pather Panchali
E.T.	Do the Right Thing	Les Enfants du Paradis	M	Ugetsu Monogatari
Dr Strangelove	The Graduate	Metropolis	Rashomon	Fanny and Alexander
A Clockwork Orange	A Night at the Opera	8 1/2	A Bout de Souffle	La Grande Illusion
Schindler's List	All About Eve	Jules et Jim	L'Atalante	Shanghai Express
Gone With the Wind	The Deer Hunter	La Regle du Jeu	La Dolce Vita	Mother and Son
Star Wars	It Happened One Night	Die Hard	Barry Lyndon	Gun Crazy
The Apartment	Midnight Cowboy	Kind Hearts And Coronets	Ivan the Terrible	Crimes and Misdemeanors
Goodfellas	Annie Hall	The Good The Bad And The Ugly	Bicycle Thieves	Last Year at Marienbad
Pulp Fiction	Spartacus	Star Wars (ep 5)	Pierrot le Fou	That Obscure Object of Desire
Raging Bull	Mr Smith Goes to Washington	Andrei Rublev	Claire's Knee	Fight Club
On the Waterfront	Double Indemnity	Seven Samurai	In the Mood for Love	Network
Apocalypse Now	Bonnie and Clyde	The 400 Blows	Sweet Smell of Success	Forrest Gump
Casablanca	North by Northwest	Once Upon a Time in the West	Out of the Past	All the President's Men
Psycho	Unforgiven	The Third Man	Persona	Snow White
Godfather 2	The Maltese Falcon	Bringing Up Baby	Talk to Her	The Philadelphia Story
Some Like it Hot	Easy Rider	Duck Soup	An American in Paris	The Bridge on the River Kwai
Blade Runner	West Side story	A Streetcar Named Desire	La Notte	It's a Wonderful Life
2001: A Space Odyssey	Modern Times	Sullivan's Travels	Fear Eats the Soul	Rear Window
Singin in the Rain	Intolerance	The Best Years of our Lives	Blue Velvet	Chinatown
Citizen Kane	Lawrence of Arabia	Nashville	The Leopard	Le Mépris

Godfather	Sunset Boulevard	The Silence of the Lambs	Orphée	The Magnificent Ambersons
Vertigo	The Wild Bunch	Shane	The Battle of Algiers	L'Avventura
Taxi Driver	City Lights	Platoon	The Dead	Man with a Movie Camera
Rio Bravo				

Films from the sample lists in the NUIM Catalogue

Sunset Boulevard	The 400 Blows	L'Atalante	Titanic	This is Spinal Tap
The Wild Bunch	Once Upon a Time in the West	La Dolce Vita	Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid	Terminator 2: Judgement Day
The Searchers	The Third Man	Barry Lyndon	The Shawshank Redemption	The Lord Of The Rings: The Return Of The King
Gone with the Wind	The Graduate	Ivan the Terrible	Jaws	The Matrix
Star Wars	A Night at the Opera	Bicycle Thieves	Ugetsu Monogatari	American Graffiti
The Apartment	All About Eve	Pierrot le Fou	Fanny and Alexander	Toy Story
Goodfellas	The Deer Hunter	La Notte	La Grande Illusion	King Kong
Pulp Fiction	It Happened One Night	Fear Eats the Soul	That Obscure Object of Desire	The French Connection
Raging Bull	Midnight Cowboy	Blue Velvet	Fight Club	Raiders of the Lost Ark
On the Waterfront	Annie Hall	The Leopard	Snow White	The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring
Apocalypse Now	Spartacus	Orphée	The Philadelphia Story	Ordet
Casablanca	Mr Smith Goes to Washington	The Battle of Algiers	The Bridge on the River Kwai	Two or Three Things I know about Her
Psycho	Double Indemnity	The Dead	It's a Wonderful Life	The Life of Oharu
Godfather 2	Bonnie and Clyde	Les Enfants du Paradis	Rear Window	Alien
Some Like it Hot	North by Northwest	Metropolis	Chinatown	Aliens
Blade Runner	Unforgiven	8 ½	Rio Bravo	The Sound of Music
2001: A Space Odyssey	The Maltese Falcon	Jules et Jim	Touch of Evil	The African Queen
Singin in the Rain	Easy Rider	La Regle du Jeu	Wild Strawberries	The Last Picture Show
Citizen Kane	West Side Story	The Good The Bad And The Ugly	The Seventh Seal	The Grapes of Wrath
Godfather	Modern Times	Star Wars (ep 5)	M	The Wizard of Oz
Vertigo	Intolerance	Andrei Rublev	Rashomon	12 Angry Men
Taxi Driver	Lawrence of Arabia	Seven Samurai	A Bout de Souffle	Cabaret
Earth	A Place in the Sun	Performance	The Red Shoes	

Films from the sample lists in the NUIG Catalogue

Unforgiven	A Bout de Souffle	High Noon	Pickpocket
The Maltese Falcon	L'Atalante	One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest	M-A-S-H
Easy Rider	La Dolce Vita	The Treasure of the Sierra Madre	Shoah
West Side Story	Barry Lyndon	Do the Right Thing	The Conformist
Modern Times	Ivan the Terrible	City Lights	Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?
Intolerance	Bicycle Thieves	Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans	Au hasard Balthazar
Lawrence of Arabia	Pierrot le Fou	Schindler's List	Pather Panchali
The Wild Bunch	The Leopard	The Red Shoes	Gun Crazy
The Searchers	Orphée	The Lord Of The Rings: The Return Of The King	Last Year at Marienbad
Gone with the Wind	The Battle of Algiers	The Matrix	Forrest Gump
Star Wars (ep. 4)	The Dead	King Kong	All the President's Men
Raging Bull	Metropolis	The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring	Le Mépris
On the Waterfront	8 ½	Alien	The Magnificent Ambersons
Apocalypse Now	Jules et Jim	Aliens	Man with a Movie Camera
Casablanca	La Regle du Jeu	The Wizard of Oz	Out of the Past
Psycho	Star Wars (ep 5)	Titanic	Talk to Her
Godfather 2	Seven Samurai	Jaws	An American in Paris
Some Like it Hot	The 400 Blows	La Grande Illusion	Tokyo Story
Blade Runner	The Third Man	The Bridge on the River Kwai	Die Hard
Singin in the Rain	The Deer Hunter	It's a Wonderful Life	Duck Soup
Citizen Kane	Mr Smith Goes to Washington	Rear Window	A Streetcar Named Desire
Godfather	Double Indemnity	Chinatown	Sullivan's Travels
Vertigo	Bonnie and Clyde	Touch of Evil	Shane
Taxi Driver	North by Northwest	Rashomon	Platoon

Films from the sample lists in the UCD Catalogue

The 400 Blows	The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring	Andrei Rublev	Heat
Mr Smith Goes to Washington	Alien	It Happened One Night	Sophie's Choice
Double Indemnity	Aliens	Midnight Cowboy	The Big Lebowski
Bonnie and Clyde	Titanic	Annie Hall	Ben Hur
North by Northwest	Jaws	Spartacus	Crimes and Misdemeanors
Unforgiven	La Grande Illusion	Sunset Boulevard	L'Avventura
The Maltese Falcon	Rear Window	The Apartment	Persona
Easy Rider	Rashomon	Goodfellas	Kind Hearts And Coronets
WEST SIDE STORY	A Bout de Souffle	Pulp Fiction	The Best Years of Our Lives
Lawrence of Arabia	L'Atalante	Last Year at Marienbad	Nashville
The Wild Bunch	La Dolce Vita	All the President's Men	The Silence of the Lambs
The Searchers	Barry Lyndon	Man with a Movie Camera	The General
Raging Bull	Ivan the Terrible	Talk to Her	Dr Strangelove
On the Waterfront	Bicycle Thieves	An American in Paris	A Clockwork Orange
Apocalypse Now	Pierrot le Fou	Shane	The French Connection
Casablanca	The Leopard	Platoon	12 Angry Men
Psycho	Orphée	High Noon	Cabaret
Godfather 2	The Battle of Algiers	One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest	The Shawshank Redemption
Some Like it Hot	The Dead	The Treasure of the Sierra Madre	Fanny and Alexander
Blade Runner	8 ½	Do the Right Thing	Wild Strawberries
Citizen Kane	Jules et Jim	Schindler's List	The Seventh Seal
Godfather	La Regle du Jeu	The Red Shoes	M
Vertigo	Seven Samurai	The Lord Of The Rings: The Return Of The King	Blue Velvet
Taxi Driver	The 400 Blows	The Matrix	

Films from the sample lists in the DCU Catalogue

Ivan the Terrible	Andrei Rublev	Le Mépris	Sansho Dayu
Bicycle Thieves	Annie Hall	The Magnificent Ambersons	The Sixth Sense
Pierrot le Fou	Spartacus	Tokyo Story	The Mirror
The Battle of Algiers	Sunset Boulevard	A Streetcar Named Desire	Nostalgia
The Dead	The Apartment	Sullivan's Travels	The Lady Eve
Jules et Jim	Goodfellas	King Kong	Saving Private Ryan
La Regle du Jeu	Pulp Fiction	The Wizard of Oz	Network
Seven Samurai	All the President's Men	It's a Wonderful Life	E.T.
The 400 Blows	Man with a Movie Camera	Chinatown	Raiders of the Lost Ark
The Maltese Falcon	Talk to Her	Metropolis	Ugetsu Monogatari
Easy Rider	An American in Paris	Star Wars (ep 5)	The Philadelphia Story
WEST SIDE STORY	High Noon	The Third Man	Fear Eats the Soul
The Searchers	One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest	Star Wars (ep 4)	Les Enfants du Paradis
On the Waterfront	The Treasure of the Sierra Madre	L'Avventura	All About Eve
Apocalypse Now	Do the Right Thing	Persona	M-A-S-H
Casablanca	Schindler's List	Dr Strangelove	Shoah
Psycho	The Matrix	A Clockwork Orange	The Conformist
Godfather 2	Titanic	The French Connection	Pather Panchali
Some Like it Hot	La Grande Illusion	Cabaret	Forrest Gump
Blade Runner	Rashomon	The Shawshank Redemption	M
Citizen Kane	A Bout de Souffle	Fanny and Alexander	Barry Lyndon
Godfather	L'Atalante	Wild Strawberries	Taxi Driver
Vertigo	La Dolce Vita	The Seventh Seal	

Films from the sample lists in the UL Catalogue

M-A-S-H	The Philadelphia Story	Network	The Mirror
Shoah	Fear Eats the Soul	E.T.	Nostalgia
The Conformist	Les Enfants du Paradis	Raiders of the Lost Ark	The Lady Eve

Pather Panchali	All About Eve	Ugetsu Monogatari	Saving Private Ryan
Forrest Gump	The Sixth Sense	Sansho Dayu	