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[Oz Film & Sound Archive Takes DFT Scanity for 16mm](#)

By [philsandberg](#) on Apr 19, 2013 in [Australia](#), [Storage Asset Management](#) |

The National Film and Sound Archive of Australia (NFSA) has acquired a motion picture film scanner for the digitisation of its extensive holdings of 16mm film in the national audiovisual collection. The new equipment will add to the NFSA's existing capability for scanning small-gauge film, and complement its commitment to traditional photomechanical film preservation.

16 mm film was introduced in 1923 and is one of the most common film gauges, favoured particularly by independent filmmakers, documentary producers, and as a format for non-theatrical distribution.

The national audiovisual collection holds 91,000 16mm titles – more than all other film formats combined. These include more than 6 million feet of television (including valuable news footage from the 1950s to the '70s), home movies, and documentaries and short films by well-known filmmakers such as David Bradbury, Bob Connolly and Robin Anderson, Tracey Moffatt, Albie Thoms, and George Miller and Byron Kennedy.

Michael Loebenstein, CEO of the NFSA said: "16mm film, once a format to liberate filmmakers from the confines of industrial production and the first 'democratic' distribution medium, has



become the ‘poor cousin’ of legacy formats. As the stewards of the Australian screen heritage, NFSA makes a substantial investment in the future accessibility of an important part of our collective audiovisual memory. The timing is fortunate as in 2013 we celebrate the centenary of Film Australia and Australian documentary film – a legacy that to a great extent survives in the 16mm format.”

Traditional photochemical film solutions are being phased out and becoming more expensive, with limited suppliers, so scanning 16mm materials is a key element in a long-term preservation strategy. Scanned materials are not discarded; they continue to be preserved in their physical formats, in optimised cool storage

The scanner selected by the NFSA is a DFT Scanity supplied from Future Reality Australia, following a tender process and an extensive period of research and market-testing. The selection criteria included the ability to handle fragile, shrunken film, and efficient scanning of soundtracks and images at high resolution – crucial requirements for archival digitisation.

“We’re delighted to be part of this important preservation initiative, and congratulate NFSA on their selection of the first Scanity in the region,” said David Edgar, Future Reality Managing Director.

According to Ian Gilmour, NFSA Manager Engineering/Research, the NFSA is looking forward to working with DFT and Future Reality, “not only during commissioning of the system, but also in sharing knowledge and experience to develop staff skills and enhance our technical capabilities in this new and challenging field.”

Michael Loebenstein added: “This scanning equipment will also potentially increase the NFSA’s capability to support digital screenings of the national collection at both the NFSA’s Arc Cinema in Canberra, and its regional touring screening programs, and offers new opportunities for restoring and re-releasing historical titles for the broadcast, home entertainment and broadband markets. The implementation of 16mm digital workflows also moves us further towards future support for the digitisation of 35mm film.”

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