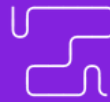


Filmstrips: A Practical Guide

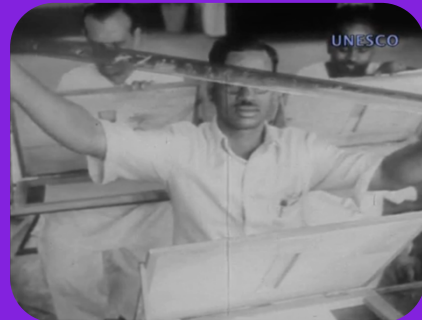


Relocating Filmstrips
Remapping Europe

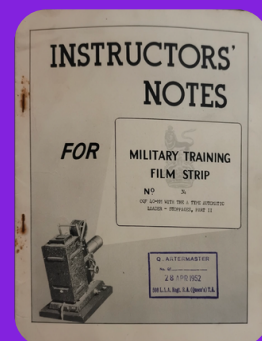
Filmstrips: A Practical Guide



1.



2.



3.

1. What is a Filmstrip?

A filmstrip is a **sequence of still images (typically 30-50) on a single strip** of film (usually 35mm but other formats like 8mm, 16mm, or 70mm exist).

Most strips were intended to be accompanied by a **scripted or recorded commentary or lecture**.

While filmstrips varied (from children's toy to instructional aid) they were predominantly used for civic instruction in Western and Eastern Europe, North America and, through colonial networks, the rest of the world (1920s-1980s).

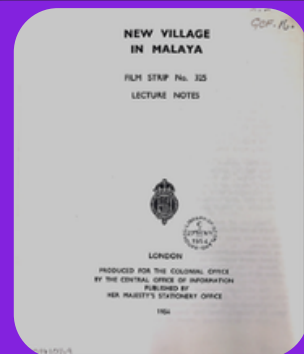
Filmstrips also worked in **conjunction with other media** such as (16mm) film, slides, wall-charts, maps, posters, diagrams, textbook illustrations, picture books, and radio programmes, and often replicated or repurposed content from these other media.

Filmstrips are an overlooked media form, often because they are confused with or catalogued with other media e.g. film, photography, or textbooks.

What is a filmstrip?



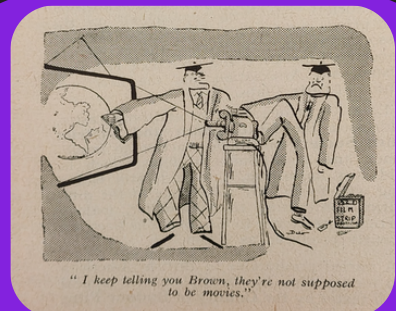
4. The strip



5. The commentary



6. The related media



7. Filmstrips are often confused with other media

2. Why do filmstrips matter?

Filmstrips are **a lost visual record** of people, places, and politics across the 20th Century

They preserve unique visual material, educational narratives, and modes of address that are often missing from film and media archives.

Filmstrips were also used **to imagine and organise the post-war world** in Europe and beyond. Many influential authors, thinkers, and artists, contributed to these visions of the future.

Equally, the intermedial filmstrip is a **case study for how to preserve the history of contemporary media**. Archival questions raised regarding the cataloguing of filmstrips (how to preserve the context of a multi-medial format?) will **impact discussions regarding the preservation of contemporary media such as PowerPoint and Tik Tok**.

Why do filmstrips matter?



8. Visions of the past



9. Visions of the future



10. Lost in the past

How do you archive this slide?

The speaker spoke over this slide



11. Template for the future

3. Identification and Cataloguing

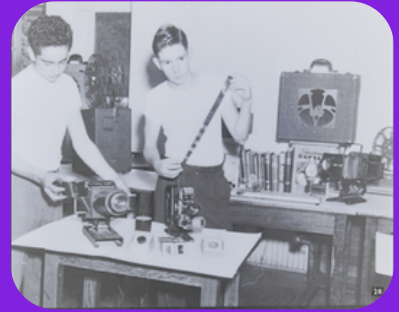
The **filmstrip** can be defined as a **multi-media object** comprising the visual strip, the textual accompanying lecture booklet and/or the aural audio commentaries. Catalogue each component as a different part of the “filmstrip.”

Here, it is **essential to standardise filmstrip terminology**: is it “filmstrip,” “film strip,” or “film-strip”? It might also be sound-strip or slide-strip. German terms such as Bildband, Stehfilm, Diafilm also mean filmstrip. **We recommend “filmstrip.”** However, it is useful to make a note of other terms for historical value.

In addition, **we suggest cataloguing**:

- title
- year of production
- country of production
- creator(s): includes writers, illustrators and photographers
- producer
- distributor
- film format (single-frame/double-frame)
- film gauge (35mm/70mm NB. filmstrips are usually 35mm)
- film stock (nitrate or acetate NB. filmstrips are usually acetate)
- film colour (b/w or colour)
- type of colouring (hand-coloured, colour-reversal stock, technicolor etc.)
- number of frames
- brief content description
- historical significance of the strip (e.g. any campaigns or movements in which it was used)
- available components (strip, text, audio)
- connected media and technologies (films, posters, books, projectors)
- connect archives (if materials related to the strip(s), such as posters, projectors, booklets are known to be in other archives)
- If information is uncertain, record this openly. Any information is better than none.
- If only individual components of strips survive. Recording what you hold can help reconnect dispersed filmstrips.
- Any additional notes or observations

Identification and Cataloguing



12. Build a filmstrip catalogue



13. Filmstrip = strip + text + audio



14. Standardise terminology



15. Filmstrips can have more than one creator

4. Storage and Preservation

Filmstrips have similar preservation needs to other paper, photographic, and film materials. Ideally:

- store in a cool and dry space
- avoid moisture and temperature fluctuations
- Use gloves to view strips. Handle carefully but without fear.

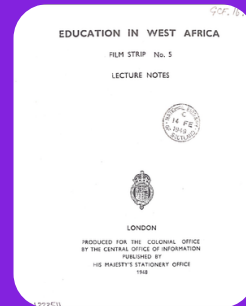
Some **challenges** in their preservation include:

- **Multi-mediality:** Components may be stored together or separately depending on resources. **If components are separately stored, try to ensure they remain intellectually connected.**
- **Packaging:** Original metal, plastic, or cardboard containers may pose chemical preservation risks, but they also hold contextual information. **Endeavour to preserve original packaging.**
- **Nitrate film:** Flammable nitrate film is rare in filmstrips but possible. Some strip edges mention both “NITRATE FILM,” and “SAFETY FILM.” The “NITRATE” in white corresponds to the negative from which the filmstrip was made. The “SAFETY” in black refers to the positive which this strip is. There is a greater chance of nitrate if the strip edge does not make any note of safety. **If nitrate suspected, please monitor condition carefully and seek specialist advice.**

Storage and preservation



16. Store in a cool, dry space



17. Link strip and commentary



18. Filmstrip packaging tells a story too



19. Don't fear "NITRATE"

5. Viewing and Access

While filmstrips were **traditionally seen using special projectors**. These projectors were **different from film projectors** and there was a great variety of them (e.g. single viewer, multi-viewer, group projection, or electric, battery operated, kersone based, or of different magnification capabilities). Some archives and libraries still have these.

Today filmstrips are best viewed through a lightbox or a visualiser. Clean hands, nitrile gloves, gentle handling, and limited exposure to light and heat minimise damaging the strip.

Digitising filmstrips can support both preservation and access. Where possible, create a high-quality scan that documents the physical object (including perforations and edgecodes) and also digitise accompanying text and audio.

Filmstrips contain a bank of images valuable for historical research. Ideally here, **digitisation should respect the original sequence of images** thereby acknowledging historical experience of filmstrips as a guided presentation.

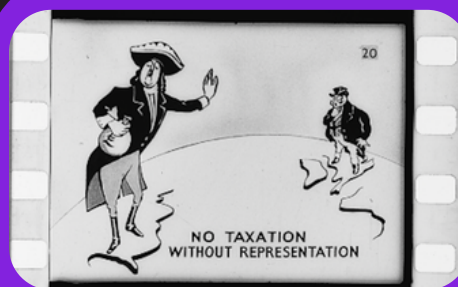
Viewing and access



20. Filmstrips can be viewed on a special projector



21. Filmstrips are ideally viewed on a light box



22. Scans reduce repeated strip use



23. Preserve sequence of images when scanning

6. Beyond filmstrips

Many archives do not have filmstrips but have related filmstrip materials.

Since filmstrips connected with films, picture books, and/or posters, an archive might have some of these. These connections bring forward new stories and can make other materials and collections more relevant and valuable.

Archives may also have filmstrip catalogues, filmstrip projectors, copyright documents, author agreements, artworks/photographs, or official correspondences that are invaluable for learning about production, distribution, and exhibition of filmstrips.

Finally, **historical journals, such as those related to visual media and education history** situate filmstrips within a history of pedagogical innovation.

These ancillary materials locate filmstrips within a larger media-archeology and socio-cultural history.

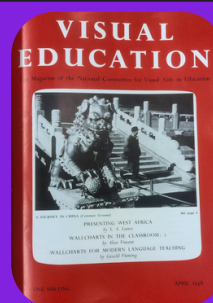
Beyond filmstrips



24. Other media have overlapping images with filmstrips



25. Ancillary materials illuminate the context of filmstrip use



26. Journals shed light on filmstrips within educational cultures

THE END



Relocating Filmstrips
Remapping Europe

Images courtesy:

- National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh (Images 4-6, 14, 16-17, 19, 21, 24a)
- Special Collections, University of Reading (Image 25a)
- Deutsches Filminstitut and Filmmuseum, Frankfurt (Image 23).
- Imperial War Museum, London (Images 3, 20, 22)
- Royal Air Force Museum, London (Image 18)



National Library
of Scotland
Leabharlann
Nàiseanta na h-Alba

DFF

DEUTSCHES
FILMINSTITUT
FILMMUSEUM



University of
Reading

Special Collections



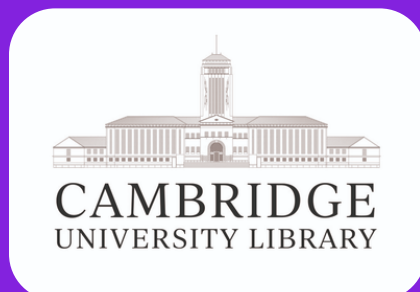
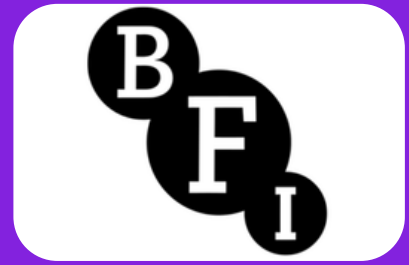
LONDON



**ROYAL
AIR FORCE**
museum

Images courtesy:

- The British Film Institute, London (Images 7, 24b, 26)
- Institute of Education, London (Image 15)
- The Wellcome Library, London (Image 1)
- UNESCO Archives, Paris (Images 2, 9, 10, 12)
- University of Cambridge Library, Cambridge (Image 13)
- All other images are from the University of St Andrews, Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main, or personal collections.



“Filmstrips: A Practical Guide” seeks to enhance the archival knowledge of filmstrip collections by putting forward some suggestions on how to preserve, present, and project filmstrips effectively. The Guide here is shaped by discussions during a workshop with participants from a variety of European archives (November 2025).

The Guide is produced by **“Relocating Filmstrips, Remapping Europe,”** a collaborative European research project, between University of St Andrews (United Kingdom) and Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main (Germany). It examines the overlooked role of filmstrips in European culture and politics before, during, and after World War Two. The project relocates filmstrips across European archives and within media history.

Archives at the filmstrip workshop:

- Steve Foxon, British Film Institute (London)
- Isabelle Hasler, freelance restorer
- Katherine Howells, The National Archives UK (London)
- Matt Lee, Bill Douglas Cinema Museum (Exeter)
- Sarah Mackay, National Library of Scotland (Edinburgh) [Also project partner]
- Sharon Maxwell, Museum of Engl. Rural Life (Reading) [Also project partner]
- Anke Mebold, Deutsches Filminstitut und Filmmuseum (Frankfurt) [Also project partner]
- Daniel Meiller (Deutsche Kinemathek)
- Alison Metcalfe National Library of Scotland (Edinburgh) [Also project partner]
- Anke Napp, Deutsches Bildbandarchiv (Hamburg)
- David Pfluger, Kinemathek (Lichtspiel) and Scan2Screen [Also project partner]
- Vasylyna Polianska Dovzhenko Institut (Kyiv)
- Clare Watson, Imperial War Museum (London)
- Maxi Zimmermann (Deutsches Historisches Museum (Berlin)

“Relocating Filmstrips, Remapping Europe” team:

- Prof Tom Rice (Principal Investigator, University of St Andrews)
- Prof Vinzenz Hediger (Principal investigator, Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main)
- Dr Anushrut Ramakrishnan Agrwaal (Postdoctoral Research Fellow, University of St Andrews)
- Johannes Praetorius-Rhein (Research Fellow, Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main)

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Relocating Filmstrips
Remapping Europe