

Australian Data Champion Partners With the Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, University of Melbourne To Give Australian Independent Film A Big Data Boost.

New digital archive provides rare opportunity to view 50 years of Australian independent film.

Hidden Australian tech champion, Arcitecta, has partnered with The Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) to create and deploy the VCA Film and Television Digital Archive. The archive is a massive achievement; over 50 years of film has been digitised, preserved and made accessible with the big data project — totalling over 78TB of historical and socially significant cultural data assets. The archive sets a benchmark for other film schools around the world for teaching, learning, research, and engagement in film.

This is not the first time big data has been a big deal at the University of Melbourne. Arcitecta has partnered with the University research platform for over 10 years. Arcitecta provides data management platform, Mediaflux, to improve compute, data and informatics capabilities across its petascale research faculties. Jason Lohrey, founder, and CTO of Arcitecta says the project with the Faculty of Fine Arts and Music lives in a truly innovative space at the intersection of science and art.

“We are at an exciting point in the evolution of incredible films; where the art challenges the technology, and the technology inspires the art. Accessing the data in a larger context than the traditional film school setting, opens up new possibilities to celebrate and discover new aspects of Australian cultural identity and the University’s impact on a global scale.

“It is exciting to empower students, teachers and researchers to engage with films in a much deeper and more sophisticated way. With our technology, they can embark on a journey of insight to patterns otherwise unseen.”

The project was driven by Donna Lyon, an Associate Director of Teaching and Learning at the VCA Film and Television School with the aim to celebrate, explore and engage with the films made by past, current and emerging filmmakers.

“I wanted to democratise the film school archive that remained shut off – inaccessible to staff, students and beyond – and ensure that these films could be seen by not only students and staff, but a diverse array of audiences”.

The project brings the rich collection of student short films to life, offering new context and meaning for current and future filmmakers, historians, researchers and contributes to Australia’s moving image history. The Archive Project has already ingested an impressive 19,270 hours of film equivalent to 214 features.

The VCA alumni are highly and widely regarded on Australian and international screens with wins at festivals such as Sundance, Cannes, and Venice. At the cinema, they are the talent behind films such as Animal Kingdom, Moulin Rouge, Romeo + Juliet, and Legally Blonde. On television, VCA graduates are responsible for shows such as True Detective, Top of the Lake, Offspring and Nowhere Boys.

"I was motivated to preserve and make accessible the back catalogue of student short films belonging to Australia's longest continuing film school and ensure that all current and future short films are available for teaching, learning, research and engagement purposes".

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