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Sean Kinder

Western Kentucky University

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Wandering the Web — Silent Film Resources

by **Sean Kinder** (Humanities/Social Sciences Librarian, Western Kentucky University)

Column Editor: **Jack G. Montgomery** (Western Kentucky University) <jack.montgomery@wku.edu>

Column Editor's Note: *Although a specialized topic, I thought it important to tap Mr. Kinder's expertise in this field precisely because it was so specialized. Many schools and colleges have or are developing film studies and field of study. Silent films not only provide insight into the history of film, but to the history, literature, art and culture of the societies that created them. — JM*

Current film releases continue to fascinate and please moviegoers the world over, but for a large number of fans, contemporary films hold little or no appeal. Instead, these fans turn nostalgically to the films of yesteryear, some even seeking pleasure in the oldest of cinematic gems — the silent film, where a movement, a look, or gesture could take on so much significance. Fortunately, silent film fans can indulge their cinematic tastes through videos, DVDs, cable broadcasts, film festivals and conventions, but they also have a wealth of information available to them on the Internet. The dozen Websites that follow can provide both neophytes and veteran silent film fans much to read, enjoy, watch, and savor.

Silents are Golden — <http://www.silentsaregolden.com/>

One of the finest sites devoted to silent film on the Internet. This site has current silent film screenings for venues across the country, over 350 photos of silent era stars, over 300 movie reviews, articles and essays on the era, recommended readings, list of silent movies available on video, TV listings of silent films, and more, all packaged in an aesthetically pleasing, user-friendly package.

Silent Era: The silent film Website — <http://www.silentera.com/>

A nice introductory site to silent films that is particularly notable for its fine information section, which includes an extremely helpful

FAQ. Elsewhere visitors are offered news items; new DVD/VHS releases; book and film reviews; profiles of people (directors, actors/actresses, writers, archivists, among others); silent theaters, and even a lost film section.

Silent Film Still Archive — <http://home.comcast.net/~silentfilm/home.htm>

Visitors will find photos, advertising, and memorabilia from silent films featured at this site. Most of the photos are scanned from vintage studio photographs that appeared when the films were released. Stills are arranged in alphabetical order by film title or by performer. A silent film lover's visual delight!

Silent Ladies & Gents — <http://silent-movies.com/Gents/Gents.html>

An impressive site containing photo galleries with over 13,250 images of 1,350 silent film stars. Visitors can search for images from an alphabetical index or by selecting from different categories: superstars, vamps, divas, flappers, virgins, sheiks, rogues, comedians, and cowboys, to name a few. As an extra bonus, visitors can even view brief movie clips (in QuickTime format). A must for all fans!

Origins of American Animation, 1900-1921 — <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/oahtml/oaohome.html>

This site, part of the Library of Congress's American Memory Collection, highlights twenty-one animated films and two fragments, consisting of clay, puppet, and cut-out animation, and pen drawings. Films can be viewed in three formats: .mpg or MPEG (Motion Pictures Experts Group), .mov (QuickTime), and .rm (Real Media). Visitors can search by an alphabetical or chronological title list, as well as search by keyword or subject.

Intertitle-o-Rama — <http://geocities.com/emrnf5/index.html>

A site devoted to intertitles, the printed words in silent films that can convey dialogue, time, location, or supply additional information. Complete intertitles for approximately 200 silent films are provided, and visitors can opt for a listing of films arranged chronologically, spanning from 1912 to 1931, or a no-frills alphabetical index.

American Film Institute's Catalog of Silent Films — <http://www.afi.com/members/catalog/silentHome.aspx?s=1>

This subsection of the American Film Institute's Website is free and does not require registration. Users can search entries for over 25,000 silent American films from 1893-1930. A typical entry contains cast, plot, subjects, genres, and historical notes.

The Silent Western: Early Movie Myths of the American West — <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/HNS/Westfilm/west.html>

After a brief introduction that discusses the myth of the American West and its expression in silent films, the site presents users with links to pages devoted to Early Film, Western Heroes, Western Heroines, Landscape, Machine, East, West, Indians and Mexicans, and the Western Epic. Content is accessible, insightful, and strengthened by vintage photos.

National Film Preservation Foundation — http://www.filmpreservation.org/sm_index.html

Website for National Film Preservation Foundation (NFPF), a non-profit organization created by the US Congress to preserve the film heritage of the United States. Visitors can learn about preservation basics, grants, cooperative projects, film archives, and films the organization has helped to preserve, the latter organized by title, date, archive or by project or grant cycle.

Silent Film Bookshelf —

<http://www.cinemaweb.com/silentfilm/bookshelf/>

This site, which reprints original documents from the silent era, covers film stars, filmmakers, movie investing, lost films, film and projection speeds, music in motion picture theaters, salaries, and many other topics. This site is not only entertaining, but highly informative as well, offering researchers and film buffs a treasure trove of material to explore.

An Introduction to Modern Music in the Silent Film — http://www.polanegri.com/music_in_silent_films.htm

This is an enlightening essay about adding music to silent film, enhanced greatly by interviews with current film music artists. This page is but one page of the highly impressive Pola Negri Appreciation site. While there, be sure to read more about Negri, who, in addition to being Rudolph Valentino's lover, was one of the most colorful of all silent film stars.

Bright Lights Film Journal — <http://www.brightlightsfilm.com/index.html>

This online journal, which appears quarterly, is a "popular-academic hybrid of movie analysis, history, and commentary, looking at classic and commercial, independent, exploitation, and international film from a wide range of vantage points..." Several issues contain articles devoted to silent film (see link on bottom right of page).

ATG Special Report from page 88

For a quarter of a century, I received almost no credit for the most research I have ever put into a project until Pete and Connie Wyrick took on the publication and produced a book in a style that far exceeded what I could have done on my own or what I ever expected any publisher would be able to do. They deserve all of the credit for the finished product. Considering the results, I am not sorry my Charleston book took so long to be published, but I should also have tried to get parts of it published as I completed them. 🐭

(Based on a lecture given at the Charleston County Library, 18 February 2004.)