

## TOOL

## 01

# Acquisitions Questionnaire

**Problem:** Amateur films, particularly home movie or cine club collections that have multiple filmmakers and contributors including women, often come to archives without typical film metadata like titles or production credits, making it difficult to locate women's participation later on.

## Strategies to Adopt:

- 1. Offer a questionnaire prior to donation agreement:** Consider offering an accessible online questionnaire for anyone who may want to register that they have a collection, even if they have not been in direct contact with your archive. This can act as a labour-saving tool as information captured here can feed directly into future metadata and collection level descriptions. Potential donor responses to a questionnaire at this early stage may also assist in acquisition decisions.
- 2. Complete questionnaire at the time of donation:** Used alongside a typical donor survey or agreement at the time of donation, the questionnaire encourages donors to provide more qualitative information about those involved in the filmmaking and the context in which the films were made. This will aid in the production of film and collection metadata.
- 3. Include questionnaires as part of the donation:** If the volume of free text questionnaire data is too much to incorporate into your archive's extant metadata structure, you could, instead, house it wherever donor surveys or agreements are kept so that future users or researchers can access it.

**Other Benefits:** If designing a questionnaire, you may also want to consider capturing other 'hard to reach' data at the same time to include gender, ethnicity, LGBTQ+ and/or socio-economic status. Your organisation may have guidance on collecting this kind of information and may require a DPIA.

**SEE SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE ON OUR WEBSITE**



A still from Margaret Currian's *A Day to Remember* (1966), showing Currian's daughter on her First Communion. Information gathered at the time of donation can provide important details and help identify participants. Image provided courtesy of the Irish Film Institute.



*The Stray* (1966, Marjorie Martin, East Anglian Film Archive).

## 01 CASE STUDY

Here we refer to a case of a filmmaker whose sister donated 15 of her amateur films after acquiring them as part of her estate. While some of these films came with very basic credits, most had none at all. Based on viewing the films (see *Tool 2: Expanded Film Viewing and Inspection*), we could tell that the filmmaker's practice was informed and varied, that she utilised many experimental techniques, entered her films into international film competitions and clearly viewed herself as a creative, though we knew very little about her.

She also maintained a collection of related papers and ephemera. The family were unsure about donating the paper collection but were happy to be interviewed and to provide information about the filmmaker and films. The donor herself, the filmmaker's sister, often acted in the films and had an intimate understanding of the filmmaker's practice.

This presented a unique opportunity to glean information about this fascinating filmmaker and her work from someone who knew her and her practice personally. Most of the films in the collection were made throughout the 1960s, after which time the filmmaker left the country. She may have continued her practice abroad, but there is relatively little information about her available to the public.

Consequently, information gathered from the donor at the acquisitions stage offered the archive an opportunity to fill in gaps in the metadata by collecting the names of cast members and participants from the donor, which would otherwise take extensive future research to obtain. Utilising the questionnaire allowed the archive to intervene early in information loss. It also reduced the labour that typically goes into both interviewing donors and researching collections.