

TOOL

03

Agent/Authority Records and Finding Aids


Problem: Agent records or finding aids within an audiovisual archival Collections Management System (CMS) are traditionally used for professional filmmakers and not amateur film collections. That means there are fewer places in which to identify women filmmakers in an existing CMS.




Discord (c1962, Flora Kerrigan. Courtesy of Frances Farrell).

Strategies to Adopt:

- 1. Develop agent records:** If 'person' agent records are available to use in your CMS, biographies of women filmmakers and their creative practice should be added here. If the functionality of the CMS does not allow for the creation of detailed agent records, brief biographical notes and filmographies can be added to free text fields at the collection level.
- 2. Prepare finding aids:** Because there are many instances in which women working in groups or cine groups have been unattributed at the collection level, the creation of short finding aids can be used to aggregate data on women who contributed to films in the collection. Each finding aid can comprise a brief description of the provenance of the collection, known women contributors, biographical data, and a complete list of associated works.
- 3. Utilise external authority records:** If you have biographical information on amateur women filmmakers but lack appropriate fields in your CMS in which to hold that information, external databases such as the Amateur Movie Database (AMDB) can be used to deposit such primary data. The AMDB, a content aggregator for amateur film records sourced online, welcomes new contributions from archives that identify key women amateurs. This can subsequently be linked to your archive CMS.


Amateur Cinema
FILMS ▾



Stuart seen in *Egypt* and *Back with Imperial Airways* via EAFA.

Ruth Stuart Rodger

Dates active:
1931-1938

Club Affiliation
Amateur Cinema League

Gender:
Female

Awards/Recognition:

AMDB entry for Ruth Stuart Rodger, offering basic information on filmography, club affiliations, and bibliographic sources. AMDB pages can be linked to relevant Work or Agent records with the CMS. Image courtesy Amateur Movie Database Project (www.amateurcinema.org).

Left: *High and Dry* (1970s, Joan Hammond, East Anglian Film Archive).
Right: Historical research revealed the significant contributions of women to club productions and allowed the creation of new bibliographical entries within the collections record. *Royal Day* (1953, High Wycombe Film Society, Wessex Film and Sound Archive).



03 CASE STUDY

In one case, we worked with a collection comprised of over 150 films produced by a British amateur cine club between the 1940s and early-2000s whose activities were reported regularly in the amateur film journals. The collection was donated to a regional archive along with documentation largely consisting of shot lists for each title.

The specific contributions of women could only be identified through on-screen credits reproduced verbatim in the shot lists and through the free-text description field. In this instance, there was no option to use agent records in the CMS. Subsequent historical research into the cine club (see *Tool 5: Using Other Research Resources*) revealed additional biographical and filmographic data linked to several key women filmmakers previously identified in the film credits.

As an alternative to the agent records, we created downloadable PDF finding aids which collated data sourced from historical research and viewing of key films in the collection. In addition to an overview of the collection and history of the cine club, individual entries were created for notable women club members. Abridged versions of the cine club history and individual biographies were also introduced to a free-text field at the collection level in the CMS, allowing for improved searchability within the database. New authority records were created on the AMDB which were subsequently linked to the CMS.