

# Madeline Matz (1936–2021)

Kim Tomadjoglou and Jon Gartenberg

**Kim Tomadjoglou** is an audio-visual curator-archivist and historian. From 2000-2008 she served as director of the American Film Institute's national collection and as principal liaison to the Library of Congress where she was a 2019 Kluge fellow. **Jon Gartenberg** was formerly a Curator in the Film Department of The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and a member of FIAF'S Cataloguing Commission from 1982-1991. He currently works with FIAF archives on distributing DVDs that they publish to universities in North America, and also repatriates to FIAF archives neglected collections of celluloid films he uncovers in commercial storage warehouses.

When we celebrate the many and varied contributions of early women film pioneers, like Alice Guy, Lois Weber, Blanche Sweet, and Mary Pickford, let us not forget women in the archive, like Madeline Matz, who worked tirelessly to make their history accessible. Preservationist, union projectionist, grant administrator, film programmer, and reference specialist, Madeline epitomized the multi-dimensional professional and creative expertise of her generation.

We remember, with great fondness and respect, her impressive career which began at the Museum of Modern Art where she worked in the film preservation department. For a decade, Madeline reveled in her working relationship with curators Eileen Bowser, her mentor, and Adrienne Mancina, and younger colleagues, Jon Gartenberg and Ron Magliozzi, with whom she maintained a lifelong friendship.

In 1978, she made a career move and headed to DC to become Assistant Technical Officer for Motion Picture Preservation in the Library of Congress, Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division, Curatorial Section, serving briefly as Acting Technical Officer. As the first woman to hold the new title, Madeline handled the delicate balance of working

closely with an all-male team to establish a high standard of precision and quality control for the motion picture laboratory. In 1988 she became a senior research/reference specialist, administered preservation grants, and contributed as film programmer to the Library's Mary Pickford Theater.

Madeline's expertise was matched by her generosity and kindness, and for these qualities and for her breadth and depth of knowledge, she became well recognized and respected among others in the field. Along with unfailing dedication and service to researchers, Madeline served on a number of grant selection and book award committees, among these, the American Film Institute/National Endowment for the Arts, the Women's Film Preservation Fund (New York Women in Film and Television), and The Theater and Library Association (New York). She held a special interest in the work of early women filmmakers and became an active member and prolific contributor to the Women Film Pioneers Project. The WFP database is greatly enriched by her discoveries of previously unremembered women.



Madeline Matz in the late 1970s.

Madeline was loved and honored by many, inspiring her co-workers and colleagues by working tirelessly to identify, preserve, restore, and exhibit film. In 2006, she received the Association of Moving Image Archivists Dan and Kathy Leab Award for longtime service to the profession, and the Theatre Library Association Distinguished Achievement in Service and Support of Performing Arts Libraries Award. A year later, at the Giornate del Cinema Muto Festival, she was presented with the prestigious Jean Mitry Award, which celebrates individuals dedicated to the recovery and appreciation of silent cinema.

In Tom Gunning's words, "It was not just her expertise and care in her work with our precious film material but her understanding and love of what film conveyed. I will always remember her describing a conversation her then young daughter had had after seeing a Griffith film. When someone referred to it as a silent film, she had blinked in confusion and said, 'But, what about those horses and guns firing and people screaming...?' Madeline had taught her that film was a living thing, even

if, or rather because, it used our imaginations to complete it. At MoMA and the Library of Congress she keeps films alive for all of us."<sup>1</sup>

In remembering Madeline, we remember those special individuals who came before us who helped to create and shape our enduring and endearing memory of film.

### Kim Tomadjoglou

When I began my professional career at MoMA at age 21, Madeline Matz was working on the preservation of MoMA's films. At this time, she would have been receiving the conservation priorities from then curator Eileen Bowser,<sup>2</sup> and cull through the file of technical vault cards, which listed individually each of the elements available for the preservation of a particular film. Madeline's office was opposite MoMA's loading dock, near to where the films ordered from the vaults would be delivered for MoMA's public screenings, conservation, and study purposes. After checking the elements on rewinds, Madeline would then proceed upstairs to the Department of Film's main offices on the fourth floor to further review the project with Eileen.

Once the films were preserved, I assisted in the quality control process by sitting in on the screening of the prints made from the preservation elements. My task was to then add the preprint and print materials to the department's card catalogue – which contained both extensive filmographic and technical data for each film title in the collection.<sup>3</sup> A particularly memorable preservation experience occurred during the D. W. Griffith retrospective organized by Eileen in 1975. I helped Madeline with the assembly of a Biograph film, with each separate shot hanging from an editing bin!

What stood out for me most about Madeline was her generous spirit. She was always readily available to extend herself to other colleagues,

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1. Tom Gunning, from "In Memory of Madeline Matz (1936-2021)", Domitor list message, posted 12 July 2021.
2. See *Journal of Film Preservation* No.102, April 2020, pp.14-17 for my own recollections of Eileen.
3. See "Film Cataloging" in Eileen Bowser, *A Handbook for Film Archives*, Brussels: FIAF, 1991.



Eileen Bowser, Emily Sieger, and Madeline Matz in 1979.

and she helped guide me through some difficult times. I would get wrapped up in a work or personal problem and she had an uncanny ability to enable me to put my thoughts and actions on pause and help me relax and keep life in perspective.

Since we lived near each other on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, I would visit her roomy apartment where we would socialize from time to time. We occasionally walked together to MoMA in midtown; on one of these excursions, she told me that she was applying for an open position at the Library of Congress. Her career flourished at the LoC, especially when she moved from the Preservation to the Reference Section and helped so many colleagues worldwide with their research projects.

I will always remember Madeline for the seriousness with which she handled her work, but most importantly, for her humanity.

**Jon Gartenberg**

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Kim Tomadjoglou donne un bref aperçu de la carrière de Madeline Matz dans le domaine de l'archivage de films, d'abord à la Library of Congress puis au Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) de New York, en citant certains des comités auxquels elle a participé, en faisant référence à son intérêt particulier pour le travail des premières femmes cinéastes et en énumérant certaines des récompenses qu'elle a reçues. Jon Gartenberg offre un souvenir plus personnel de sa collaboration avec elle au MoMA.

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Kim Tomadjoglou ofrece un breve resumen de la carrera de Madeline Matz en el ámbito de los archivos cinematográficos, primero en la Biblioteca del Congreso y luego en el Museum of Modern Art de Nueva York (MoMA), nombrando algunos de los comités en los que participó, haciendo referencia a su especial interés por la obra de las primeras mujeres cineastas y enumerando algunos de los premios que recibió. Jon Gartenberg ofrece un recuerdo más personal de su trabajo con ella en el MoMA.