

## RPL STAFF PERSPECTIVES

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### WORKING AT AV SERVICES

The first job I had after graduating from the film program at the University of Regina was with AV Services at the Regina Public Library. It felt like coming home. I'd been going to the Central Library since I was a child, and as a young adult I became a regular at the Film Theatre. When AV began its VHS collection I worked my way through Bergman and Truffaut and other gems.

Being on the other side of the counter meant I got to look out from the mezzanine level of Central towards the light-filled interior, busy with people and the quiet drone of voices. It also meant I had the opportunity to work with AV's exceptional staff. At its core were three women—Jean Dreher, Eleanor Powell, and Judy Tremblay—who knew the collection inside and out, and were committed to making sure that patrons were aware of the bounties available. In those days, the 16mm film collection was the heart of AV, and we had weekly visits from teachers looking for films to show their students. Jean, Eleanor, and Judy spent a lot of time with the teachers to make sure that they had the films they really needed, and their commitment has stayed with me as an ideal example of the public service.

As a member of AV, I had the opportunity to be part of the staff of the Film Theatre, joining a long line of film school grads who worked there, including Will Dixon, Brian Stockton, and Spyro Egarhos; the tradition continues today under the inspired programming of another film school grad, Belinda New. Selling tickets meant I missed the first and last fifteen minutes of the films, but I did get to see the middle sections several times. On rare occasions when the distributor messed up, I even got to make public announcements such as “we apologize but we are unable to show Woody Allen's *Alice*. Instead we will be screening an animated Czech film with the same title directed by Jan Svankmajer. We will be happy to refund your tickets.” To their credit, most of the audience stayed that night.

I loved working at AV—the conversations with co-workers about the films that had played that weekend in the Film Theatre, the 16mm films returning and heading for the cleaning and patching machine, the chats with patrons checking out videos and CDs and vinyl records. On Thursdays there were the heavy cans of 35mm film waiting to go downstairs to the Film Theatre and on Mondays they'd be back up in AV, ready to ship to the distributors or on to the next theatre. And I saw the public service a library provides from a new perspective—working at the library felt like (because it is) an important and fulfilling job.

After a bit more than a year at AV I moved to Montreal to pursue a master's degree. Over time, AV was disbanded as a separate department, and the staff and their deep knowledge were dispersed through the library system. The 16mm films left the collection; many of the prints ending up at the film program at the University of Regina, where they were used for student editing exercises.

These days I teach in the film program and we still have those cans of film with Regina Public Library labels on them. I'm still a regular at the RPL Film Theatre, and a frequent borrower from the RPL's impressive collection of DVD titles; the collection even includes a few of the films I've made. I'll always be grateful for the opportunity I had to work at the institution I value most in Regina, in that lovely building on Lorne and Twelfth, alongside some of the finest people I've ever worked with.

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### **RPL FILM THEATRE**

The Regina Public Library Film Theatre was established in 1975, a culmination of the work of the Regina Film Council and the Regina Film Society with the RPL since 1946. When current 16mm films were no longer available, a 35mm projector was purchased in 1988. Twenty-five years later, there was another shift—to digital. RPL Film Programmer Belinda New described the move to digital:

By 2012, it had become nearly impossible to obtain new 35mm film prints. The age of digital film was here. With