Case for Support: 'Women's Film History Network – UK/Ireland'

<u>Rationale and Research Context</u>
This resubmission seeks to establish an **inter-disciplinary**, **internationally connected**, **'Women's Film History Network – UK/Ireland,'** while addressing issues raised by peer-reviewer 152534, regrettably missed during PI (AHRC checked) teaching/research leave abroad. Resubmission adapts to AHRC revised Research Networking Scheme, reduced international budget and institutional changes, including PI employment status. Regarding reviewer reservations, we eliminate 'project' from the title to distinguish networking from project content, distinguish women's *film* history, from history of women in general and clarify the international dimension of the UK/Ireland network, while reducing originally 5 workshops to 4. This proposal seeks to promote and support research into women's filmmaking in UK/Ireland through workshops addressing urgent historiographic and practical questions - conceptual frameworks, methodologies, digital resource design – as pre-requisites for current and future projects.

Governments, museums and libraries increasingly recognise the importance to national histories of film archives - recognition matched by growth in historical scholarship and efforts to preserve, research, make available diverse cinematic histories. Traditionally, film history has been gender blind, particularly regarding women as workers (other than actresses) in film production and circulation, while feminist theory has focused on textual questions of representation and subjectivity. A groundswell of international activity now seeks to redress this gap, beginning with the American initiated **'Women and Silent Screen'** congresses **(WSS)** held biennially in different countries since 2000, and **'Women and Film History international,'** supporting work across the silent/sound divide. Until recently little effort was made to retrieve UK/Irish women's filmmaking history and only scanty UK/Irish representation in these international fora. However, 'Women and Silent Britain' at BFI Southbank in November 2006 drew committed support from established film historians, archivists, women's media organisations and a new generation of postgraduate researchers. They demanded a **network**, supported by **on-line resources**, to overcome disconnection between isolated initiatives and duplication of effort. Despite setback at first application, an informal grouping has maintained momentum. Two PhD students established a successful website, 'Women and Silent British Cinema,' at http://womenandsilentbritishcinema.wordpress.com/. An increased number of British researchers contributed to 'Women and Silent Screen,' Stockholm, June 2008. A second event at BFI Southbank is scheduled for November 2009, a Women's Film History event at Newcastle University in Spring 2010 and a British strand planned for WSS in Bologna, June 2010.

The proposed network embraces **women's *film* history** (contributing to but not itself a history of women) from **1890s to present,** encompassing women filmmakers' transition to sound, while seeking to preserve fast disappearing materials for future histories of recent women filmmakers. Recognising historiographic problems specific to researching women, the diversity of women's entry-routes into filmmaking (as scriptwriters, designers, cinema managers, publicists, critics, audiences, pressure groups or as wives and collaborators), and needing to consult diverse sources (e.g. family histories,

personal records), the proposed network is **interdisciplinary**, involving established scholars in **women's history**, **literary studies**, **publishing history**, **media studies** and **film history**. It seeks to learn from these disciplines' methodologies, while considering neglected cross-media practices, making connections – particularly important for women in Britain – between publishing, literary activity, journalism and film/television industries. Equally, women's history and literary studies gain from engagement with film historiography for analysis of women's writing and mediation of women's lives as evidence.

Recognising cinema as **an international medium**, with filmmakers crossing national borders and consequent dispersal of histories and research resources abroad – factors neglected by purely nationally-oriented film histories – the network promotes **international interactions**, which will 1) examine research problems raised by migratory careers, including foreign women working in UK/Ireland and vice-versa; 2) link with archival and print resources abroad; 3) widen social and historiographic understanding through cross-national comparisons. Given limited funding, international collaboration is focused through the American-led **Women and Film History International (WFHI)**, chaired by Professors Jennifer Horne (Catholic University) and Mark Cooper (South Carolina University), while Professor Jane Gaines (Columbia University) leads its web, film and book publishing activities. These include **Women Film Pioneers Project**, which, collaborating with the Library of Congress and supported by funding from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, acquires and restores women's films from across the world, while running a publishing programme with Illinois University Press. Preparation of a digitised international *Women Film Pioneers Resource Book* is supported by Columbia University's **Center for Digital Research and Scholarship (CDRS)**, which contributes database expertise, including digitising stills, documentation and related intellectual property rights. These activities interact with affiliated European women's film history projects, and will be facilitated by a WFHI website (from June 2009), jointly administered by American (Columbia University) and Italian (Bologna University) website designers. Participation in this international exchange will enable the UK/Irish network to engage with different national perspectives, benefit from Columbia's digital resources and expertise, as well as increase awareness of UK/Irish women's filmmaking abroad.

The proposed workshops reach beyond the academy to involve film archivists, preservationists, librarians, museum curators, film programmers and educators in UK/Ireland, USA, and, through WFHI, Europe**.**

Aims and Objectives
The network pursues three inter-related aims:

1)   Establish a UK/Irish interdisciplinary, internationally connected, forum to:
   - confront historiographic, interdisciplinary and trans-national problems
   - develop an enabling framework for researching UK/Irish women's film history in an international context
   - inform design of on-line resources.

2)   Draw on a range of UK/Irish and international expertise in archiving, cataloguing, preservation and digital resource construction in order to identify:
  - issues in database construction and sharing
  - means of linking existing resources with current and future developments
  - sustainable mechanisms for curating on-line resources.

3)   Establish a flexible administrative structure for the maintenance of the network connected to WFHI to:
  - link UK/Irish with international initiatives
  - support future funding bids (e.g. EU Framework funding)
  - maintain an ongoing forum of debate/information exchange
  - mount events
  - widen participation

Timetable of Activities

From a broad group of confirmed participants, a 6-person Steering Group (SG) undertakes forward planning, designing agendas for 4 Workshops of 12-15 participants who will deliver position papers according to expertise and designated briefs.

Nov 09   SG 1 – Birkbeck College

Jan 2010   Workshop 1 - Sunderland University: *Interdisciplinary Strategies for Women's Film History*

  - Problems of gendering film history: exclusion or hidden participation?
  - Lessons from comparative women's history and feminist literary history for women's film historiography – e.g. questioning canons and gendered production roles.
  - Placing the writer and actress in film history.
  - Implications of different career routes and cross-media relationships for researching women's participation in filmmaking.
  - Relations between feminist/film theory and history.
  - Questions of gender agency versus problems of authorship in cross-media and collective industry practices.
  - Gender, digital cultures, future histories.

  SG 2

March 2010   **Workshop 2 - Columbia University**
National Location, Trans-national Media, International and
Comparative Research

- Problems of national attribution in internationalised media.
- Lessons from comparative women's history and literary studies for national and cross-national research.
- Re-construction of global film histories to reveal women's activities.
- Practical research problems posed by cross-national, cross-media movements of women filmmakers.
- Problems of identifying women's presence in existing national media and film archives/collections.
- Identification of archival, preservation, classificatory, database, website design and copyright issues for international resource and research collaboration.
- Practical solutions.

SG 3 (USA)

October 2010   **Workshop 3 - Women's Library**
Resourcing Women's Film History-UK/Ireland: Archives,
Access, Digitisation

- Key issues from Columbia seminar for development of digital resources to support internationally connected UK/Irish network.
- Gendered cataloguing and classification.
- Adapting UK/Irish resources to serve cross-media, trans-national research.
- Identifying best means to gather, store and disseminate information within a digital environment, anticipating future web technologies.
- Mechanisms for sustainable development, curation and access.
- Strategies for preservation, film-theatre programming, on-line streaming of women's film/video.
- Sites for housing the project's eventual digital platform.

SG 4

Easter 2011   **Open Network Caucus, Sunderland University Conference:**
Doing Women's Film History: Problems, Issues and
Opportunities

June   2011   SG/Workshop 4 – Women in Film and TV (WiFT) offices
Infrastructure/Strategies for a Sustainable Women's Film
History Network - UK/Ireland

- Draw up constitution for interdisciplinary 'Women's Film History Network – UK/Ireland', internationally connected via 'WFHI' and Columbia University.

- Organise development of network membership base, continuance of Network activity, brief for database construction, and initiation of funding search for database developer(s).

Confirmed Participants Include:

Women's History
Sally Alexander (Professor/Modern History, Goldsmiths; editor, *History Workshop Journal*)
Penny Summerfield (Professor/Modern History, Manchester)
June Purvis (Professor/Women's/Gender History, Portsmouth; editor, *Women's History Review*)

English Literature
Laura Marcus (Regius Professor/English Literature, Edinburgh)

Publishing
Alexis Weedon (Professor/Publishing Studies, Bedfordshire; PI, 'Cross-media Cooperation in Britain, 1920-39.')

Film/Television/Media
Ruth Barton (Lecturer/Film, Trinity College, Dublin)
Melanie Bell (Lecturer/Film, Newcastle)
John Burrows (Associate Professor/Film/TV, Warwick)
*Christine Gledhill (Visiting Professor/PI, Cinema Studies, Sunderland)
Sue Harper (Professor/Film, Portsmouth)
*Julia Knight (Reader/Moving Image/Co-I, Sunderland; PI, 'Future Histories of the Moving Image Research Network.'
Annette Kuhn (Professor/Film, Queen Mary)
*Emma Sandon (Lecturer/Film/Media, Birkbeck)
Amy Sargeant (Reader/Film/TV, Warwick)
Lisa Stead (PhD Candidate/Bill Douglas Centre, Exeter)
Sarah Street (Professor/Film, Bristol)
Yvonne Tasker (Professor/Film/TV, East Anglia)
Sue Thornham (Professor/Film/Media, Sussex)
Clare Watson (PhD candidate/Lecturer, Archiving, East Anglia)

Archives/IT
Elaine Burrows (Ex-curator NFTVA; board member, Circles/Cinenova)
Bryony Dixon (Curator, Silent Cinema, NFTVA)
Liz Drew (Digital Collections, Birkbeck)
Jane Fish (Imperial War Museum)
Nathalie Morris (Post-doctoral researcher/Curator, Special Collections, BFI)
Sunniva O'Flynn (Curator/Irish Film Programming, Irish Film Institute)

Libraries/IT
*Teresa Doherty (Archive/Museum Manager, Women's Library)
Luke McKernan (Curator/Moving Image, British Library)

Organisations/IT
Janice Headland (BFI Information)
Linda Kaye (Research Executive, British Universities Film/Video Council)
*Kate Kinninmont (Chief Executive, WiFTV (UK))
Laraine Porter (Director, British Silent Cinema Festival)
Nicky North (BFI Education)
Mark Duguid (BFI Screenonline)

USA
Mark Cooper (Associate Professor/Film/Media, South Carolina) }   (Executive
Jennifer Horne (Assistant Professor/Media, Catholic University) }   Secretaries, WFHI)
*Jane Gaines (Professor/Film; Director, International Women's Film History Project,
        Columbia)
Nancy Goldman (Head/Pacific Film Archives Library/Film Study Center, Berkeley;
        Head/Cataloguing/Documentation Commission, International Federation of Film
        Archives)
Alice Kessler-Harris (R. Gordon Hoxie Professor/American History; Professor/Institute
        for Research on Women/Gender, Columbia)
Antonia Lant (Professor/Cinema Studies, NYU)
Terry Lawler (Director, WiFTV (NYC)/Women's Film Restoration Project)
Kim Tomadjoglou (Film Restoration)
Anne Morra (Film Programmer, MOMA, NYC)

Europe
Monica Dal'Asta (Professor/Cinema, Bologna)
Sofia Bull (PhD candidate/Lecturer, Stockholm)
Annette Brauerhoch (Professor/Director, German Women's Experimental Film Archive,
Paderborn, Germany)

Management and Co-ordination
1.   Christine Gledhill, PI, overall network co-ordinator (including external liaison),
supported by Julia Knight, Co-I (including internal organisation), and Research
Administrator (Sunderland).

2.   SG (in bold above) drawn from confirmed participants supports PI and Co-I, identifying issues raised by workshops and future planning. Participants (asterisked above) administer workshops located at their institutions.

3.   Workshops draw on participants pool according to relevant expertise.

4.   SG meetings follow workshops to identify issues, formulate action points, prepare following workshops.

5.   Minutes circulated to all participants for feedback (Sunderland).

6.   Wiki (Bedfordshire University) facilitates exchange of information, ideas and debate within the Network; website (Sunderland) enables access to progress by a wider community of educators and cultural activists.

Dissemination/Exploitation

1.   **Network panels** at annual **'British Silent Cinema Festival'**, organised by post-doctoral researchers in 2010 and 2011, including American/European speakers.

2.   N**etwork-run open caucus** at '**Doing Women's Film History'** Conference (Sunderland, 2011), to disseminate key findings from workshops and consult with a wider research community, including Network contribution of 2 American, 2 European/Irish, 4 UK speakers.

3.   N**etwork-run sessions,** '**Researching and Teaching Women's Film History'** for postgraduate and new professionals at Sunderland's Conference and Columbia Workshop.

4.   N**etwork-run round table, 'Researching Women Filmmakers and Film Historiography'** for NYC-wide Columbia seminar.

5.   **On-line reports and papers** from each workshop, promoting network activities to wider audience, with potential for later publication.

6.   **Papers** occasioned (not funded) by network activity at '**British Silent Cinema Festivals'** 2010-2011 and at **'Women and Silent Screen Congress,'** Bologna, 2010.

7.   **Establishment of infrastructure to sustain Network** beyond AHRC funding, as generator of new projects and support for researchers/archivists/film programmers.

8.   **Development of funding bid** to employ database developer/website designer to support Network and researchers in women's film history.

9.   **Development of funding bid** to European Framework to further UK/Irish and European women's film history project collaborations.   **(1,995 words)**