Hearst Metrotone News Collection Research Guide

The UCLA Film & Television Archive’s Hearst Metrotone News collection is one of the largest newsreel collections in the world. It contains over 27 million feet of theatrically released newsreels, unreleased stories and outtakes that range in date from the beginning of the series in 1914 through 1968. Additional materials in the collection were occasionally collected until the early 1980s after television had ultimately surpassed the newsreel’s central role of distributing moving image news to the public. In 1981, the bulk of the Hearst Metrotone News collection was donated to the UCLA Film & Television Archive along with the copyright for these materials.

In cooperation with the Archive, the Packard Humanities Institute developed a website (newsreels.net) as part of a joint project, formed in 2014, to make the Hearst collection more easily accessible to the public. The website contains footage from thousands of items (about 15% of the collection, as of 2023), along with some of the original Hearst documentation. The website is a work in progress and will expand and change as more material is added.

In addition, the Archive has transferred thousands of items from the newsreel collection to DVD and
VHS copies that are available for on-site viewing through the Archive Research and Study Center (ARSC). This guide represents a sample of the relevant materials held by the UCLA Film & Television Archive. Please consult the UC Library Search catalog (search.library.ucla.edu) for further listings or contact the Archive Research and Study Center for assistance.

Archival content is reflective of the period in which it was created. Films and television programs from the past contain biases and representations that were and still are offensive and harmful. The UCLA Film & Television Archive preserves and presents such historical documents as originally created in order to illuminate the past and inform the present in support of an equitable society.

Silent era footage

The majority of the silent era footage in the Hearst collection was acquired as part of the first shipment to the UCLA Film & Television Archive, and primarily consists of negative material from the International News and MGM series covering the years 1919 to 1930. Unfortunately, every issue had been broken down into its individual stories and most opening and closing logos had been removed. Also, since the film stock used for titles was more prone to deterioration than that used to shoot images, employees at Hearst had removed them as an inexpensive means of conservation, making the authentication of silent era footage difficult. Of this footage, about 140,000 feet survives including two complete issues.

Silent era newsreels often included an animated segment produced by Hearst’s International Film Service. These were based on comic strip series appearing in Hearst newspapers. None of this material had been saved as part of the Hearst Metrotone News collection, however the Archive holds a limited amount of these animated titles, which were donated by private parties or other archives.

Sound era footage

In the early 1930s, at the beginning of the sound era in motion picture history, Hearst formed a partnership with Fox Film Corporation and formed the Fox-Hearst Corp. This was the last of a number of strategic alliances Hearst made since beginning newsreel production (e.g. Hearst-Selig, Hearst Vitagraph, Hearst-Pathe, etc.). After the Fox-Hearst partnership terminated in 1934, Fox kept all Fox Movietone News released newsreel material and all of the “cuts & outs” for both Fox Movietone News and Hearst Metrotone News. At this point Hearst’s film library was little more than the surviving silent era footage and a more-or-less complete set of nitrate projection prints of Hearst Metrotone News kept on the MGM studio lot in Culver City, California. During the 1970s, MGM decided it would no longer store nitrate in Culver City prompting film librarian Ted Troll and other Hearst employees in New York City to persuade King Features, (the then current Hearst subsidiary in charge of the newsreel
collection), to acquire these prints rather than risk their destruction. This material was then transported to the East Coast where they were incorporated into the Hearst film library. It was this reconstituted collection that was donated to UCLA.

**A history of the Hearst Metrotone News Collection at UCLA**

Following the donation of the Hearst Metrotone News collection to the UCLA Film & Television Archive in late 1981, collection materials were shipped out in three major deliveries. The first of these shipments arrived in the spring of 1982, and consisted primarily of nitrate film from 1919 to 1952. Two additional shipments of footage from 1952 to 1967 were delivered to the Archive in 1985. The donation of the newsreels included an assortment of related paper documentation such as an index card catalog, synopsis sheets, and disposition sheets that provide useful information about the footage shot by Hearst newsreel cameramen, as well as news footage Hearst acquired from other sources. In addition to the theatrically released newsreel series in the collection, television productions were also included, the most significant being *This Week in Sports* and *Telenews*. Some film series produced by Hearst Metrotone News were not included in the gift, the most prominent of these being *Farm Newsreel, School Reel, Screen News Digest, Almanac Newsreel, Perspective on Greatness, The History Makers*, and *Our Times*. UCLA has received a few copies of *Screen News Digest* from other sources.

**Major components of the collection**

*International News / International Newsreel* (January 1919 – July 1929): Issues of this series were released twice weekly and went by both titles listed above. Out of an estimated million feet of newsreel material released during its ten-and-half-year run less than 100,000 feet survives today. The International News Corporation produced these films, which were then distributed by Universal Pictures. The Archive has received some additional footage from private sources and other archives or libraries. These films include a handful of animated segments such as *Joys and Glooms* and *Indoor Sports*.

*MGM News* (August 1927 – July 1929): For several years Hearst produced two different newsreel series, one distributed by Universal Pictures the other by MGM. One of these series was *MGM News*, (perhaps best-known today as the company Buster Keaton worked for in the 1928 film *The Cameraman*), which was released twice weekly. Less than 20,000 feet are known to survive.

*MGM International Newsreel* (July 1929 – May 1930): This series was initiated when Hearst ceased production of the silent newsreel series distributed by Universal. The titles *International Newsreel* and *MGM News* were combined to create *MGM International Newsreel* and the volume and issue sequence from *MGM News* was continued. It was released twice weekly and distributed by MGM. About 10,000
feet survives.

**Hearst Metrotone News / News of the Day** (September 1929 – November 1967): Hearst started production of sound newsreels in partnership with Fox in September 1929, simultaneously producing both *Hearst Metrotone News* and *Fox Movietone News*. In October of 1934, the Fox-Hearst partnership was dissolved, and Hearst continued production of sound newsreels through the Hearst Metrotone News Corporation. In November 1936, bowing to increased public criticism of William Randolph Hearst, the name of the series was changed to *News of the Day*. The series was released twice weekly by MGM and nearly all of the issues up to 1967 survive today. These issues, along with unreleased footage accumulated during their production, make up the majority of the 27 million feet of film in UCLA’s Hearst Metrotone News collection.

**Telenews** (ca. 1954 – 1962): *Telenews*, a syndicated newsfilm service for television, was a part of the Hearst newsreel enterprise from roughly 1954 through 1962, and often shared material with the *News of the Day* series.

**Special productions:** On occasion, Hearst would produce a special film that was not part of any regular series. The Hearst collection contains several examples of these productions.

**International News / International Newsreel** (January 1919–July 1929)

**Theodore Roosevelt Compilation. Hearst Vault Material** (1900–1919). Includes footage of President Roosevelt and scenes from his funeral. Study Copy: VA10113 M

**International news. Vol. 1, issue 11—excerpt** (1919). “Women besiege Capitol to urge suffrage bills; from all parts of New York State they descend upon the legislative halls demanding the passage of laws affecting the interests of women, Albany, New York.” Study Copy: VA11092 M


**International news. Vol. 4, issue 64—excerpt** (1922-08-11). “Women of India fight for Home Rule; Hindus and Mohammedans unite in National Congress to back Gandhi’s non-co-operative movement—Delhi, India].” Study Copy: VA8417 M


International News. Vol. 8, Issue 97 (1926). “Horse push ball new sport for college boys – Mussolini smiles – Town flooded as moving hill smashes river embankments – Parisian porters prove they’re not always slow – World’s greatest monument finished after 48 years – Thousands at Tia Juana as racing begins again – New British war tanks in spectacular battle.” Note: This title is one of the few apparently complete silent newsreels in the Hearst collection. Study Copy: VA4967 M, VA13867 M, DVD620 M


MGM News (August 1927 – July 1929)


**MGM International Newsreel** (July 1929 – May 1930)


pilot aloft in sensational test!” Study Copy: VA4628 M, VA10129 M


Hearst Metrotone News / News of the Day (September 1929–November 1967)

Prelude to War (1929-10–1941-12). Over 800 examples of archival news footage from the Hearst Metrotone Newsreel Collection at UCLA, depicting important events of the 1930s, as selected by a national advisory committee made up of historians, film archivists and filmmakers, and as restored and preserved by the UCLA Film & Television Archive. Study Copy: VA17295 M—VA17324 M


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**Telenews (ca. 1954–1962)**


other. Accused by Johnson of absenteeism during civil rights debate, Kennedy commends Johnson’s qualifications for continued Senate leadership." Study Copy: VA7842 T

Special productions

_The Mirror, Reflecting the Past and Present: Do You Remember?_ (1922). A short subject covering the history of manned flight. Study Copy: VA6581 M

_Metro News_ (ca. 1929). A one-reel promotional film for Hearst’s silent newsreel series. Study Copy: VA3717 M, VA12474 M

_Roosevelt: The Man of the Hour_ (1933). A 2-reel short biography of Franklin Delano Roosevelt made shortly after being elected president for the first time. Study Copy: VA3539 M


Animation from Hearst silent newsreels (ca. 1910s–1920s)


_Indoor Sports_ (1921). Animator, Wm. C. Nolan. Short based on the work of “TAD” (Thomas Aloysius Dorgan) a cartoonist for Hearst’s _New York Evening Journal_. Inventory Number: HFA598 M


Hearst productions that were not part of the gift to UCLA
**Screen News Digest. Vol. 1, Issue 5—Focus on Berlin** (ca. 1959). “The tense story of a divided city, from the fateful Potsdam Conference in 1945 to the threat of a new Berlin blockade, is told in a graphic review, in depth, of this crossroads of crisis.” Study Copy: VA15950 M


### Related moving-image material


### Additional resources
For more information please contact the Archive Research and Study Center.

Hearst Metrotone News, Inc. / Volume 1 – Corporate History


Stanford Theatre Foundation Newsreel Collection—Inventory & Synopsis Sheets

Telenews Synopsis Sheets 1954–1962

Additional resources—UCLA Library
For more information please consult the UC Library Search catalog.


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**STUDY GUIDE FUNDED WITH A GRANT FROM THE MYRA REINHARD FAMILY FOUNDATION**