

Title of the proposal : *The Variant entity : a possible landmark for a better knowledge of the film collections*

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Abstract :

CNC has been aboard the Cinematographic Works Standards (CWS) Project since the very beginning. Alongside BNF and INA, our institution represented France within CEN TC 372, responsible for achieving both EN 15744 and EN 15907, and their Dissemination Activity Programme - when the “*Promoting the use of European Standards on the Interoperability of Film Databases*” project Team (PT) was launched in 2010, CNC provided one of the 4 hosting experts, and organized a Workshop in Paris that was acknowledged as a success.

CNC's genuine commitment to the CWS is the result of our belief that the standards present solutions to many issues that Film Archives and Cinémathèques confront on a daily basis. One of our major problems is having to deal with different versions - short, long, censored, and so forth - of the same film, since it frequently occurs in our collections. The problem happens to be multiplied when it comes to restored versions, whether we simply hold them or produce them, as it has been more and more the case for several decades now. And when the same film has been restored several times in 40 years, the difficulties can be countless. Using screenshots of our current database, we will explain the limits we meet in identifying and handling those different versions by using mainly a carrier-oriented approach. We will use the records of two films as examples : *Le Joli Mai*, that concentrates length, censorship and authorship issues, and *L'Inhumaine*, which has given rise to many restorations already, in-house or by other operators, that are as many milestones in 40 years of the history of our institution. We intend to demonstrate how the Variant entity constitutes precisely the answer to those issues, by presenting what the situation of both films becomes in the new database that CNC is currently developing with Cinémathèque française, and that implements all of EN 15907 entities.

Although we were – and still are – convinced that CWS's four levels for description match the life cycle of the film, before and after it enters the collections of a Film Archive, we encountered many difficulties while adapting this architecture to fit a complex computer model. Screenshots of successive deliveries of our new system (still in progress) will show the price that we paid for both our level of requirement and our dedication.

In order to share our experience wholeheartedly with the workshop speakers and attendees, we will testify how in that process, we felt that the Manifestation entity was the most uneasy to apprehend, maybe because our current database already embeds this concept, although in an implicit – or unspoken – way. In this regard, the very point of our presentation would be to explain how this long journey has convinced us that, especially when confronted to the very materiality of the film collections, the Variant would be the main added value of the CWS, since it is the entity that best allows us to render the life of both the Cinematographic Work and the institution that holds it.