

## CALL FOR PAPERS

### **CFP: The Golden Age(s) of Documentaries**

An area of multiple panels for the 2014 *Film & History* Conference:

Golden Ages: Styles and Personalities, Genres and Histories

October 29-November 2, 2014

The Madison Concourse Hotel and Governor's Club

Madison, WI (USA)

**DEADLINE for abstracts: June 1, 2014**

AREA: The Golden Age of Documentaries

One constant throughout the history of documentary has been the quest for, or a claim to, a higher truth or authenticity. Yet, ever since John Grierson coined the term "documentary" in 1926, there has been no easy consensus as to what defines the genre. Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922) is often cited as the "first" documentary, leading many to interpret that the genre's *sine qua non* is a pronounced ethnographic or cultural thrust.

Over time, the quest for authenticity has validated the use of numerous techniques, such as dispensing with scripts, or directorial subterfuge to provoke the subject into revealing his or her true self. These techniques, of course, are at the core of the cinema direct and cinema verité movements of the 1950s and '60s—an era that is a prime candidate for the Golden Age of Documentary.

Leading into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, documentaries have been increasingly characterized by hybridity and an infusion of fictive narrative techniques. How do these developments affect our understanding of documentary and "the real"? How have our understandings of documentary "truth" evolved over time?

This area invites 20-minute papers examining a variety of questions, themes, styles, and filmmakers associated with documentary film, from the Lumière Brothers factory film (1895) through breakout art house features such as *Muscle Shoals* (2013), nature blockbusters such as *Wonders of the Arctic 3D* (2014), and documentary shorts and online films, such as *Mr. Christmas* (2013)

Possible panel topics include, but are not limited to:

- The nature of cinematic truth(s) in documentary filmmaking (close readings, comparative studies, truth-making strategies in a range of historical periods)
- The impact of technological advances on communicating authenticity
- The television news documentary: Edward R. Murrow's and Fred Friendly's *See it Now* and *CBS Reports*, NBC's *White Paper*, and ABC's *Close-Up*, and the National Film Board of Canada's *The Candid Eye*

- The work of such filmmakers as Dziga Vertov (and Kino-Pravda), Robert Flaherty, Wolf Koenig, Jean Rouch, Albert and David Maysles, Robert Drew and Richard Leacock, and D.A. Pennebaker
- The rise of the internet documentary

Proposals for complete panels (three related presentations) are also welcome, but they must include an abstract and contact information, including an e-mail address, for each presenter. For updates and registration information about the upcoming meeting, see the *Film & History* website ([www.filmandhistory.org](http://www.filmandhistory.org)).

Please e-mail your 200-word proposal by 1 June 2014, to the area chair:

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