

# ARTS COUNCIL FILMS

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Kryisia Rozanska  
Lighthouse Media Centre  
Wolverhampton Art Gallery  
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Dear Kryisia,

It was nice to meet you again yesterday. I felt our discussions on a Video Access Library were very productive.

I am happy to indicate the Arts Council's continuing interest in establishing a video access library at the Light House. However, a number of important areas of concern need to be resolved before the Arts Council could release their tapes.

There are, as you know, five video access libraries. All of them except the ones at New Cinema Workshop and Southend Public Library are experiencing major problems, mainly over staffing. The history over staffing indicates that for the library to be successful a full-time member of staff is needed; any attempt to integrate library activity and say bookshop work is just not feasible. Access libraries must be seen as a public service and educational resource; they simply do not make money; they need specialised staffing which would provide the knowledge needed to support the library. For example a knowledge of the content of the tapes is essential. This is not simply good customer relations but also allows for the formulation of a good and coherent purchasing policy.

The Light House would have to indicate that it was willing to staff the VAL with a person whose sole role would be the upkeep, running and maintenance of the library.

There are a number of other operating objectives that need to be fulfilled:

- 1 Easy (walk-in) access
- 2 VAL as an extension of a broad education policy
- 3 VAL as a positive extension to the work of a multi-arts complex

Access libraries contain all Arts Council-produced documentaries (for which I am responsible. Most often VALs have a comprehensive collection of independent videos and a growing collection of community tapes made both locally and nationally; indeed it is one of the main principles of access libraries that they are an enabling mechanism for access to other sources of films on tape

and video-originated productions. Therefore, extension is not limited and is dependent on individual library development, which is another reason why staffing is crucially important.

Copies of all Arts Council productions are made available on a permanent loan basis. There are now over 150 titles (worth £9,000 at retail price). I provide copies of everything to date at the inception of the library and then update the collection regularly as new films are produced.

It has become apparent that access as a resource has to be highly visible if it is to be successful. There are many possible ways of alerting potential specialist users in education but the concept of being able to view on demand is central to the whole area. Consequently, a visual display promoting the resource is very important.

At the moment the number of people able to view at any one time is, for legal and in some cases technical reasons, restricted to groups of between four and six people per monitor. However, I am working on a scheme that would extend the non-theatrical use of those tapes to larger viewing groups.

I hope that the above-outlined principles are acceptable to you and look forward to speaking to you early in the New Year and establishing a video access library in Wolverhampton as quickly as possible.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely

Will Bell  
Film Education Services Officer