

JOINT FUNDERS STRATEGY GROUP - London visits

Meeting with Circles: 21 November 1989

Present: Jenny Holland, Jill Henderson (Circles M'ment Cttee), IW

Much of the first part of the meeting was taken up with Circles' concerns around the BFI restructuring: the fact that they felt threatened by being funded by a part of the Institute which they considered to be "in competition" to them as distributors. They also felt that the BFI needed to reaffirm its commitment to equal opportunities in terms of its funding.

Otherwise, we spent a relatively constructive time romping through their activities over the past year which, I have to say, gave me a bit of confidence that Circles is beginning to be more realistic in terms of its need to generate earned income.

- Lots of time spent in acquisitions - 42 new titles ranging over women's work in e.g.. Columbia, Mexico, Australia, USA, Canada, U.K., reflecting Circles' commitment to showcase international product. Pursuing Media '92 schemes on distribution. Have made a number of contacts overseas and been granted expenses paid trips to festivals. Have recently been discussing structures with NY based "Women Make Movies" which they see as a potential model for a revamped Circles. This group has a contract with a shipping company which deals with the physical dispatch of their material, and to which they pay a flat fee which is then incorporated into their price structure.

- BFI gave Circles £2000 towards a business plan in 1989/90, and they are about to finalise a brief and choose a consultant.

- working on their marketing strategies. Circles has decided to produce a series of postcards, the first of which is a thematic collection of early women filmmakers. Have placement from Leicester Poly working on this and drawing up budgets. Initial run of 500 packages to be sold at selected RFTs etc.

- video sales - thinking of piloting selected number of tapes at selected bookshops which would be sold at a reduced rate. Have been successful in the sale of clips of films, and now looking at the possibility of a documentary sale.

- catalogue supplement - have budgeted for its completion. Considering a donations scheme for print purchase to accompany release of catalogue.

- working with Margaret O'Brien, Education Officer at MOMI on study days for 10 - 16 year olds and teaching courses, providing product on "social issues" e.g.. environment and giving Circles the opportunity to work with teachers and develop packages.

As I said, Circles does seem to be making efforts in the right direction, but still nothing on the cards for a possible merger with COW. assistance with marketing strategies seem to be the most likely area of assistance for the future, but it is to be doubted whether, without revenue funding, this organisation will continue to exist.

Irene Whitehead
November 1989