

IDA Workshop Introduction by Sandra Schulberg
September 12, 2025

Good morning all of you!

Before I start my presentation, I'd like thank our hosts and co-sponsors, and then give you a little historical context.

I am indebted to our colleagues Linda Tadic & Jeff Masino at Digital Bedrock for proposing that we undertake a workshop together.

Abby Sun embraced this idea and her team – Maria Abraham, Gabriella Ortega Rickets, Katy Hurley, Armando Zamudio – have been wonderful collaborators and hosts.

Many thanks to our co-sponsors – Christopher Racster at Outfest, Kirsten Schaffer and the team at Women in Film, and Larry Laboe & George Gomez at New Filmmakers LA.

You are all helping your members focus on saving their films.

WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

American independent filmmakers since WWII have made many more films than the studios.

In my 20s — I am now 75 — I became one of a ringleaders of what we described as the **Indie Film MOVEMENT**.

“Movement” was a term we used because we were media activists...We had to be.

- We had to go theater-to-theater to get our films shown because so few distributors existed.

- We had to form our own self-help organizations — Film-Makers' Cooperative, New Day Films, Newsreel, AIVF, Women in Film, Black Filmmaker Foundation, Outfest, the IFP (the LA branch of which is now called Film Independent), First Run Features, IDA, and Womens Film Preservation Fund.
- We had to fight for critical recognition.

We managed to break through — helped by acclaim outside the U.S. where festival directors, distributors and critics were quicker to recognize our cinematic daring, ingenuity and social commentary.

- New distributors arose in the US to release our films in theaters.
- "Visions" and "American Playhouse" were funded by a consortium of foundations to commission independent filmmakers.
- Marc Weiss launched POV.
- ITVS was funded by CPB (whose recent demise we mourn).

And as equipment got cheaper and more portable, we made lots and lots and lots of important films.

- I argue that our indie films offer a broader, more diverse and more nuanced view of American history & culture.
- They are essential to understanding who we are and where we came from.

But now indie films are orphans in a perfect storm.

- We are fortunate that all the major film archives in the US have a commitment to saving indie films; but they are running out of space just as the 60s & 70s generation of filmmakers is dying off.
- Upon our deaths, we are disgorging thousands of film elements that have no place to go.
- Furthermore, many of the big private film collectors are in their 70s. We know a collector with 30,000 films that he wants to divest.
- And we are still dealing with the remains of the film labs: Technicolor, Deluxe, DuArt, WRS, and many others.

And I'm not even talking about the thousands and thousands of digitally-made films that are at even greater risk.

So,...WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

We have to become activists in order to save our own films because we can't assume that someone else will do it for us.

- That's why I started IndieCollect – to raise the alarm and to help many indie filmmakers before it's too late.
- At IndieCollect we prioritize films shot on celluloid, but we are in the middle of our first video restoration.
- Every film we restore becomes a digital object – which means it's far more ephemeral than celluloid.
- So I'll be paying attention to Linda's presentation because she specializes in saving digital objects.

OK, that's my intro...But before we start, I would like to see a quick show of hands.

- How many of you work at a film advocacy organization?
- How many of you are media archivists?
- How many of you are filmmakers?
- Among you filmmakers, how many have shot mainly on film? On video? On digital?
- How many of you need help with "future-proofing protocols?"

Well, you've come to the right place!