

# Sending nitrate films back home

The National Film and Sound Archive is repatriating some of its fragile stock

**T**he NFSA is repatriating over three thousand reels of foreign nitrate film material to selected film archives in America, Canada, France and England, the countries of origin. In order to streamline its own very large collection.

This first batch includes early English newsreels and the famous *The Astronomer's Dream* made in 1889 by pioneer French filmmaker, Georges Melies. Copies of the most significant material have been retained for

research and screening purposes.

The decision to deselect this material from the Archive's collection was not taken lightly. The NFSA does not have the resources to take proper care of this material, either storing or preserving it. The priority is to look after Australian material first.

All of the material is on unstable nitrate film stock, so that it will continue to deteriorate if not given proper preservation attention. The Archive fears that if it

were to keep these films it would probably be more than 20 years before they were considered for restoration or copying, and that it would be irresponsible to hold onto these films for that amount of time.

The response to this initiative has been very positive. Many overseas archives hope to discover some hidden gems in the collections and the practice of nitrate repatriation is consistent with international conventions among major film archives. ■



The NFSA repatriated 2940 metres of the Jean Renoir film *La Grande Illusion*, starring Erik von Stroheim, to the Centre Nationale de la Cinematographie.

## Call for papers

Sixth Australian Library History Forum, Monash University, November 1994

**T**he forum is now firmly established as the Australian occasion for the exchange of news, views and accounts of current research in the field. It is a fairly informal, peripatetic colloquium which has been held at various places in Eastern Australia since 1984, when the first, under the energetic sponsorship of Professor Jean Whyte was held at the Graduate School of Librarianship at Monash University.

It had been thought that the Forum should be held in the West this year, but unforeseen circumstances has precluded that. So it is proposed that it should return to its origins at Monash in November. Anyone interested in presenting a paper should get in touch with Professor John Levett, Chair of the Department of Librarianship Archives and Records, Monash University, Clayton VIC 3168, phone (03) 905 2955 fax

(03) 905 2952.

No particular theme for the Forum has been identified, but it has been suggested that it might profitably examine the often complex intersections between the profession and technology.

Other suggestions as to theme are welcome, so if you are working in the field of library history and would like to share the fruits of your labours, why not give John Levett a ring? ■