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MOTION PICTURE, BROADCASTING
AND RECORDED SOUND DIVISION

February 15, 1993

Dr. James Billington
Librarian of Congress
Library of Congress
Washington, D.C. 20540

Dear Dr. Billington:

I am always struck by the attention and concern that usually follows a deranged person smashing a Michelangelo statue or spray painting an old master in a museum. Yet, as a matter of every-day fact, artistic treasures are left to decay and destruction due to a lack of a national preservation policy of our cinematic heritage. As film students we learned that had not the copyright law required early silent films to register themselves by printing paper photos of each frame, that we would no longer have any of the early silent films at all.

Also, the cinema is an art form in which America has been pre-eminent. We are and have been the center of world cinema. Yet without the preservation efforts in other countries; notably France and Russia -- many of our films would have been lost. The cinema is and has been a tremendous source of money favoring ourselves in the world trade balance. It will continue to be so. Aside from the great cultural imperative to preserve our films, there are sound economic reasons as well.

As owner of a number of my own films, my company has seen the wisdom of an extensive preservation effort. I urge that our nation adopt a sensible preservation policy as well.

Sincerely,


Francis Coppola

20