

Interviewee: John Izod (Professor K J Izod)  
UoS Dates: 1978 - 2010  
Role(s): Senior Lecturer, Film and Media Studies.  
Latterly Professor of Screen Analysis.  
Dean of the Faculty of Arts, 1995 - 1998  
Currently Teaching Fellow  
Emeritus Professor



## Interview summary:

### *Summary of content; with time (min:secs)*

**Start 00:08** – JI initially had an interview in 1969 for the English department at Stirling but he was unsuccessful. He came back in 1978 for a post in film studies which was initially funded by the British Film Institute. He was given the chance to set up the subject and was given three years to show it was worth funding by the University. One successful thing about Stirling was that the steering committee assigned to the new subject gave good advice but wasn't constricting. Ian Lockerbie (then Professor of French) chaired the committee and was one of the motivating forces behind it. JI liaised with Lockerbie for five years until full power was handed over. Grahame Smith of the English department was also on the committee; he and Ian had a passion for film studies. John Drakakis also from the English department was interested in media relating to Shakespeare. Donald Low (also from English Studies) the fourth member of the committee also held a strong interest in media. The intention had been not a department of film studies but film and media. JI alone ran the subject for a few years.

**04:51** – JI was expected to teach and research; it was deemed essential that he publish. He immediately set about writing a book as film was a passion, and found that Film Studies research was at that time a less crowded field than his previous specialism of Renaissance Studies. Helped by Derry Jeffares [A Norman Jeffares] who was very encouraging with people he worked with. *Reading the film* (1984), in the Longman series of which Jeffares was general editor, was his first publication. He hoped his book would make the subject a little easier for students. JI brought an Elements of Film module with him, and successfully proposed a second on Genre, which proved very busy. The Genre module gave way to one on Westerns, which was very easy to teach, partly because the films are richly imbued with elements of myth, which students, particularly Americans, found attractive.

**11:28** – He was originally the only one in the department plus the four on the committee. He found the secretary of French department helpful. There was a diverse background of students. They all had to do other degrees. Some were taking it for an easy pass and some were real enthusiasts. Some productive joint degrees with art history were created until the department of Fine Art was cut.

**13:00** – They worked with 16mm films, which they had to rent. There was a decent technician for Cottrell building who was very helpful. JI often had to take equipment from level 4 to 2, struggling under the weight of a projector, speaker and film. No money for a porter's trolley. There was some excitement on campus around the new film studies. Students then called a strike when he was finally set up, it was a very civil one. All new staff were made aware of the disaster and

the cost of the Queen's visit of 1972.

**17:18** – A few years after JI's appointment Film and Media had been established as a proper degree at the university, and a second member of staff, a Media specialist, was required. JI joined the selection committee which was a unique thing due to his junior status. Dan Macleod was selected. MacLeod had been working for BBC Scotland as one of their education staff making him a well-known figure amongst teachers and people in the media in Scotland. JI observes that Dan, an excellent networker, had an outgoing personality that was complementary to his own. The department also eventually expanded with their equipment especially in terms of sound equipment. They soon had Nancy Lyons appointed as their secretary as well as Fine Art's. The subject soon came under pressure as it had quickly become popular but it was greatly under staffed. It was a time of the first major appearance of Film and Media in universities across the UK, several departments as in Stirling having started up around 1978 under the British Film Institute funding initiative.

**22:19** – JI had assumed that success would bring more money and staff. However cuts from government sources in 1982 were devastating. The university lost Fine Art and music due to this, Chemistry was badly injured, politics scheduled for closing. The cuts were so severe that there was no prospect of recruiting people outside the university so they looked internally for staff. They recruited Germanists Peter Meech and Richard Kilborn and sent them out to go get a Master's degree in media. Mike Cormack later joined from the University Library and gained a Stirling Film & Media PhD. It was an intimate and thriving department. There was still pressure from students. At one point 2000 wanting to start the degree.

**26:55** – Big gear shift when the degree programme was launched, the steering committee fell away and the staff became responsible for the running of the department. The decision to put in a Chair to give the subject a sense of presence. JI ran for the position but lost out to Philip Schlesinger, a talented man and an excellent leader. The department already had a research professor in the distinguished journalist Alastair Hetherington, who worked in the media side of the course. Mike specialised in film, Peter in advertising and Richard developed the module of television drama.

**30:18** – With his reputation Hetherington got many requests for research projects which he would accept provided he could include one of his colleagues in his research. For example, was asked by the Scottish Arts Council to look at the prospect of the arts for what became the internet. Alastair knew where to go and who to talk to for every project. He taught the other members of the department invaluable skills from his journalism days, particularly the importance of deadlines. Alastair insisted on splitting the fee down the middle, even though he was doing most of the work. JI flew to London to discuss the project, which was achieved in a chat over coffee. Their deadline was the end of August but Hetherington decided to move it forward to April. Hetherington, who did the lion's share, was devastated when he missed his own revised deadline by 3-4 days. JI says he has learnt a lot from Hetherington

**35:51** – When JI arrived he was given a room on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of B corridor in the Cottrell building. He remembers getting the key, walking into the office and being met with a majestic view of Dumyat, and the royal blue carpet and telephone which were the only physical things in the room. When Dan Macleod came JI had been on holiday and when he came back every flat surface in the office was covered in paper as Macleod didn't know how to function without a secretary. Eventually the department moved to new offices along with Fine Art and Music to Pathfoot's E corridor. For a while they made use of analysing projector which didn't allow for frame by frame observation. They upgraded to a Steenbeck which was placed in a room that allowed for only about 8-10 students. Used TV studio for production work, helped by technicians. Eventually the department moved and took up almost all J corridor one side G and a substantial sides of D corridor used for editing of radio and video, and stores.

**41:18** Relations with the MacRobert Centre. Soon after JI arrived he was invited to join the film selection committee which had considerable say over the programming for Sunday night movies and school holidays. Eventually when the new small cinema opened it was run professionally. There was an uneven but always friendly relationship between the MacRobert and the university. When the department has a decent budget it rents out the MacRobert for 3 hour sessions. It is only done for films where the experience of the big screen is essential. Western movies were often shown there.

**45:30** – Once the department had been in Pathfoot for a while they convinced the university to buy 16 mm film and a screen that was similar to the MacRobert's. It is still there till this day but the projector they used is gone now. They had to set up the three huge reels and disassemble and clean everything each time it was used. JI describes thrill of experiencing film running in large auditorium. There has been a big change to editing with small screens. The department now has a whole suite for editing of film and sound. There is always a lot of excitement around it. Students do a great deal of brilliant work, and it isn't always down to expensive equipment.

**51:05** – JI enjoyed using the archives in Stirling. He got a letter from Janet McBain the director of the Scottish Screen Archive. The letter said they were looking after Lindsay Anderson's papers, videos and books wondered if the university could take and use them. Director of Information Services Peter Kemp was eager. The university had no one to archive the collection so funds were raised for this and they hired Karl Magee. Put together a project for work on the archives,

as well as a publication. Consequences of this is an online detailed catalogue of the archives. JI describes the revelation of Anderson's complex personality through his diaries.

**56:21** – JI says it was a pleasure to work in the department. It had a warm ethos and has always been friendly. Relationships with colleagues went beyond work. Even through constant change they constantly got on with each other. Staff to student ratio is extreme. Department does not spend enough time together but they do celebrate things. JI enjoys experiencing colleagues giving a paper. Kat Lindner gave a great talk on embodiment in cinema. It led to his co-author and him changing the direction of a book they were working on. Excitement of young colleagues that reinvigorates the department.

[Ends 1:00:35 ]

<b>Interview No:</b>	SURSA OH / 043	<b>SURSA</b> University of Stirling Stirling FK9 4LA  <a href="mailto:info@sursa.org.uk">info@sursa.org.uk</a> <a href="http://www.sursa.org.uk">www.sursa.org.uk</a>	 <p><b>SURSA</b> Oral History</p>
<b>Interviewed by:</b>	Gordon Willis		
<b>Date of interview:</b>	11/02/15		
<b>Summary completed by:</b>	Laura McLoughlin		
<b>Date:</b>	04/07/2016		