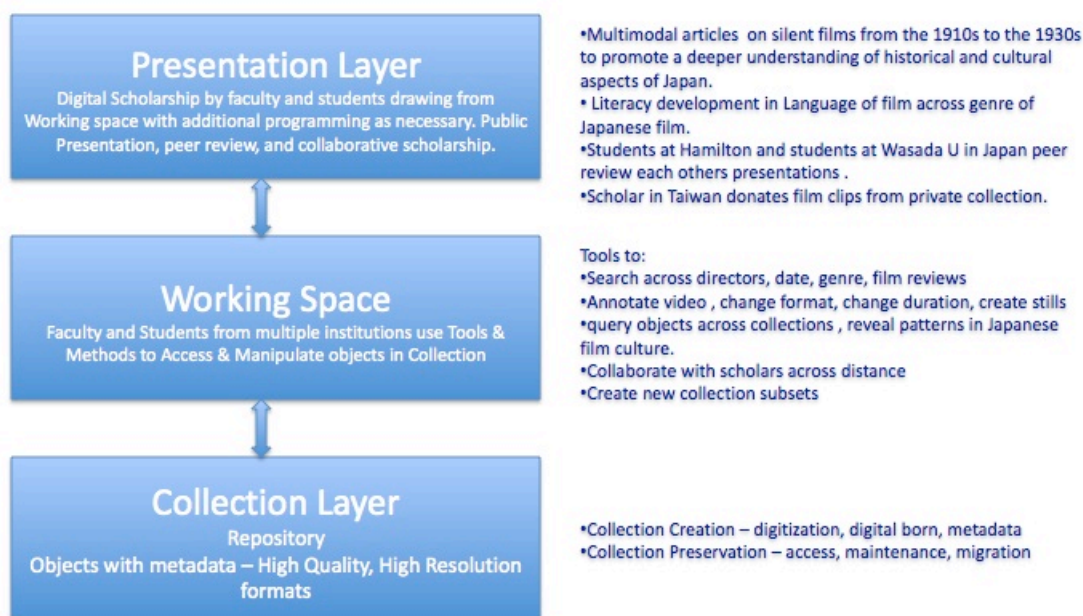


Figure 2

Professor Kyoko Omori's Japanese Film Project



Kyoko Omori, Associate Professor of East Asian Languages and Literatures (Japanese): *Comparative Japanese Film Archive*

Professor Omori began development of a Japanese film archive over the summer of 2009. As of September 2009, the archive stores video clips and stills from 14 feature-length films and 4 shorts. Having collected close to five hundred images from these movies, the archive obviously covers only limited aspects of Japanese cinema. Still, it is a concrete first step toward a collection of a much wider range of Japanese films that holds potential value for comparative study in such disciplines as cinema, new media, literature, art, history, and cultural studies in general. The impetus of the list of films selected to date was provided by her new “Introduction to Japanese Film” course. This course surveys the history of Japanese cinema over the last 110 years. As it stands now, the archive is useful for any student or faculty interested in determining certain directors’ signature styles and in assessing genre differences – from camera work, editing, sound effects, lighting, stage properties, and acting, to various other aspects of film.

Beyond the more general scope of the first phase, Omori hopes to enhance the archive through a specific focus on silent films from the 1910s to the 1930s. The images in the archive can be used broadly to promote a deeper understanding of historical and cultural aspects of Japan. However, she envisions that the archive of modernist Japanese cinema will serve pedagogical needs beyond simple literacy training. With the advent of technology and the already globalized socio-economic context of 1920s Japan, writers had explored various new mass media (such as film, radio and the phonogram), seeking to invent new narrative styles suitable to depict the changing material and psychological experience of Japanese modern life. Omori believes that a critically comparative examination of the narrative strategies employed in Japanese literature and cinema is

crucial not only for understanding the early twentieth century, but also for grasping the developmental trajectory of modern narratives over the course of the entire 20th century through the present. The digital archive will be useful for those studying film theories, as well as for those seeking to acquire knowledge about technology, cultural forms, and cinematography.

Omori has focused mainly on Japanese cinema, but other faculty and students might be interested in adding elements from other “national” or international cinematic traditions under specific themes such as gender, ethnicity, cross-pollination of artistic movements, etc. She plans to capture images from rare historical footage and feature films of early 20th century Japan. The preservation of these films has been a struggle, due largely to a lack of economic support for the preservation of vernacular art. In cooperation with some of the film preservation groups in Japan, Omori hopes to add rare Japanese films to the archive. She believes that this new Japanese film archive will contribute to various college-wide curricular initiatives, as it upholds the institutional commitment to teach students to analyze texts and to write skillful arguments. As part of the *Digital Humanities initiative* and the new Cinema and New Media Studies minor, this project will help to integrate the study and teaching of more conventional literacies (i.e., literacy of written texts) with new types of media literacy. More particularly, Omori envisions that this digital collection will help to build a skill set and knowledge base among undergraduate students that will, in turn, generate opportunities to conduct archival research and film analyses at film archives such as the National Film Center and Waseda University in Japan.