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Founded in 1949, the Deutsches Filminstitut – DIF is the oldest cinematic institution in Germany and also one of the country's largest. To collect, process and analyse information on film is one of the main purposes of the DIF. A second purpose is the collection of films, their preservation and, if necessary, restoration in order to bring them back to the screen.

In 2006, the Deutsches Filmmuseum, Frankfurt/Main, merged with the DIF and is now an institution of the latter. After their fusion, the joint institution is now able to provide a variety of services and comprehensive expertise in film: from collecting any materials relevant to film history (e.g. film copies, posters, photographs, reviews) to the scientific analysis of these materials and their eventual public presentation in screenings, at festivals and exhibitions, via publications or the Internet.

The DIF is engaged in several educational activities and a new focus was set on media education. School Cinema Week is held annually since 2007, allowing school children nationwide to exchange their morning classroom for the cinema. The DIF also runs two cinemas; The award-winning Cinema of the Deutsches Filmmuseum in Frankfurt – showing a multi-faceted program of up to 700 feature and around 400 short films from all regions of the world, and the Caligari Filmbühne in Wiesbaden, presenting further archival treasures twice a week.

Aside from its functions as research institute, museum and archive, the DIF is also actively engaged in promoting film culture in the scope of several national and international projects.

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