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**THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE BRINGS TOGETHER ITS COMPREHENSIVE COLLECTION OF
FILM AND BRITISH TELEVISION DATA INTO NEW WEBSITE**

***Sigmer Technologies develops database solution and new website framework
for the BFI's new filmographic database***

London, 7th September, 2006 – Sigmer Technologies today announced it has developed a comprehensive database solution and framework for the BFI's collection of filmographic data, including world cinema, film and television, onto a new searchable film and television website. As the custodian of one of the largest national film and television archives in the world, the BFI presented Sigmer, provider of bespoke software solutions and website consultancy, with the challenge of developing the database, creating the search functionality to query the database and hosting the new website.

Besides the huge scale of the information to be transferred – over 810,000 British and international film and television titles, 1.2 million actors, directors, producers and film and TV professionals, biographies and filmographies, 23,000 festival and event listings, and 210,000 organisations – Sigmer was also tasked with creating a search engine that would generate the appropriate search results for the different types of users, including members of the public, film fans, academics and industry experts. Sigmer drew on its usability testing and search engine development expertise to ensure that the database and search functionality of the BFI site had the flexibility to deal with the many different types of users' requests.

Another core objective was for the BFI's developers to be able to manage and make changes to the system at any point in the future. Sigmer provided a generic framework that would model the database at an abstract level and provide easily configurable XSL, which allows simple plug-in of design for the new site layout and visual design.

The Sigmer team has over 30 years collective experience in working with LAMP technologies (an open source Web development platform based on Linux, Apache, MySQL and PHP). One of the BFI's main requirements for the new database was to work with an open source platform. To add further flexibility to the system, Sigmer has created a **new web service** utilising the SOAP XML standard, which will allow syndicated content from the BFI to be effortlessly integrated and displayed on third party websites.

Margaret Luck, BFI Database Project Manager, says, "The BFI has been collecting information since 1933 which has been available on databases accessible only by BFI staff and Library users. It has been an enormous achievement to transfer all this disparate data onto a single platform. Sigmer's search functionality and LAMP technology-based database architecture ensures our new Film and TV Database is now available to all via our website. Whether a serious film researcher or a member of the public with a general interest in film is visiting the site, Sigmer's solution means that they will not only be able to find the relevant information on their subject of choice, but also view the search results according to their particular area of interest."

The BFI has launched the Film and TV Database as part of its BFI Online initiative which aims to make the Archive more widely available using a whole new range of web and digitised content. Matthew Dean, Development Manager at Sigmer Technologies adds, "We have a real sense of accomplishment from this project and are proud to have worked with such a well-respected and interesting organisation. There were so many different and challenging specifications from the BFI, so we made sure that we engaged with them from the earliest stages possible and kept in close contact at every stage of the development. We regularly presented them with the prototypes of each application in order to gauge their ongoing

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requirements and our usability testing and search engine experience means that the BFI website is accessible to *all* user types. This was a main criterion of the BFI. "

Sigmer separated the kind of data held for each filmographic 'article' into three categories: *a party* (e.g. an individual like Jean-Luc Godard); *a work* (e.g. a film like 'Tout Va Bien' or a TV series like Dr Who); and *an event* (e.g. an awards ceremony like the Academy Awards). Sigmer then assigned different levels of search in order to appeal to all types of user:

Level 1: simple keyword
Level 2: keyword and search field
Level 3: complex Boolean

This tiered approach enables the user to drill down further, to generate results as detailed as the Academy Awards of 1997 or an individual episode of Dr Who. When looking at any search result, the user has a choice of 'views' of that result. For example, a *work* result might allow the user to view by the film's cast, its production credits, or its music credits. A *party* result might allow the user to view by credits in chronological order, or by credits organised by activity, such as by director or executive producer.

Tara Mun, Marketing Manager at Sigmer Technologies, commented, "The BFI is an esteemed organisation and being chosen by them to deliver a database solution for this mammoth project demonstrates Sigmer's strength and ability in producing software applications and IT solutions. Sigmer drew on its expertise in database technology, search functionality and LAMP technologies in order to meet the BFI's most challenging requirements."

About the British Film Institute

There's more to discover about film and television through the BFI. Our world-renowned archive, cinemas, festivals, films, publications and learning resources are here to inspire you.

Visit www.bfi.org.uk

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About Sigmer Technologies

Sigmer Technologies, founded in 1999, is based at the University of Sussex, Brighton, and has attracted a number of high profile clients, including: British Sky Broadcasting; The International Save the Children Alliance; British Red Cross, RNIB and RNID, The British Film Institute, South East England Development Agency and Memorex. Through a carefully balanced team of specialist developers, designers and consultants Sigmer provides a full range of programming, web design, Internet and IT based services individually tailored to clients' needs. More information about the company can be found at

www.sigmer.com.

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