



How do I win???

An exploration of what makes a MIFF Doco Short, and how to predict a winner

Introduction

- MIFF is a very important film festival for Australian Film. Arguably, it is the most well-known Australian film festival, both locally and internationally.
- However, what seems a little upsetting is the lack of Australian representation in short docs (at least intuitively)
 - The short doc programs that I have personally seen (2019 and 2020) were both predominantly international. 2019 had one Australian doco short, and 2020 had none.
 - Also, Steve complains a lot about MIFF programming less and less VCA and Australian doco shorts, so there's something.

Exploratory Questions

- What does a MIFF Doco Short look like?
 - General exploration of MIFF Doco Short metadata
 - How many are Australian? Does that change over time?
 - For funsies: can we predict a winner based on metadata?

The Dataset

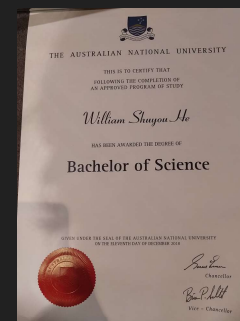
- A list of 176 different MIFF doco shorts from 2004-2019
- Hand compiled, because the MIFF Archive is garbage so there was a lot of googling and cross-checking
- Includes:
 - Title, Director, Year, Runtime, Nationality, Language, IMDb Rating, Festival Director, Winner (or not)

Null and alternative hypotheses

- Now we actually have to test things to come to conclusions
- But what will we test?
- I think there are two questions we can explore with more definitive results:
 - Are there less and less Australian films in MIFF Doco shorts over time?
 - Test by Festival Director and by Year
 - Are there ways to predict what films will win MIFF Doco Shorts?
 - After looking at the winners, can potentially predict based on IMDb, Runtime, Language, and Australian-ness

How we will be testing

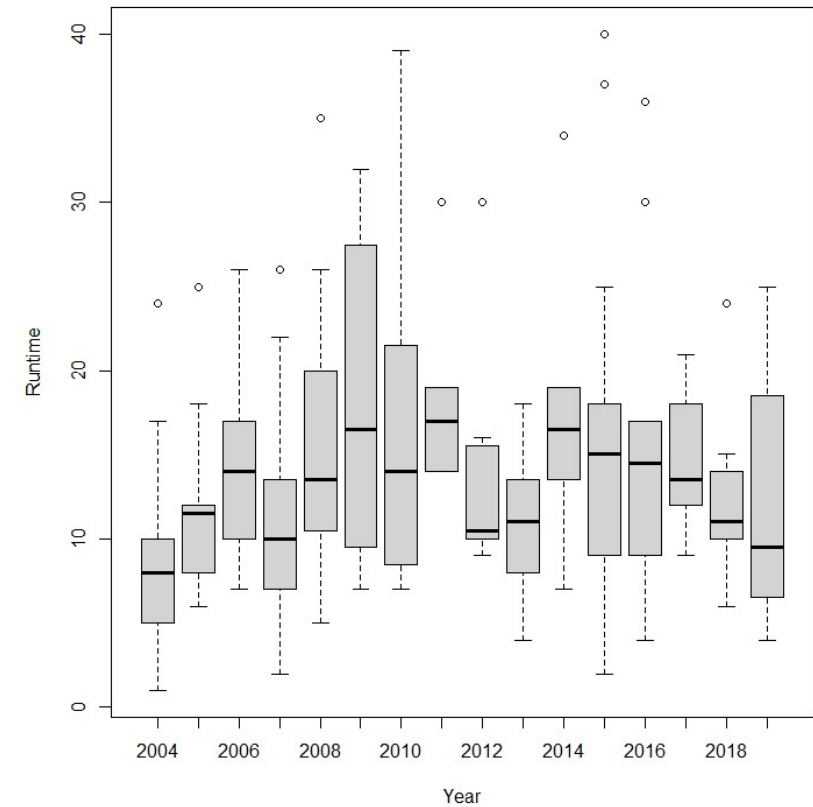
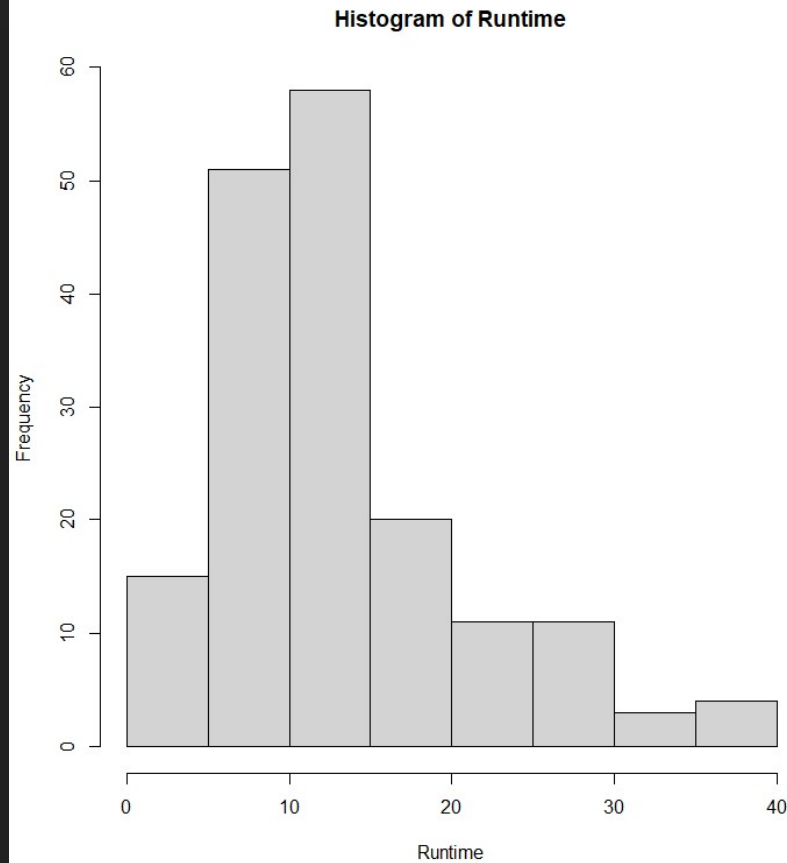
- Using Logistic Regression
- This also controls for all the other variables being tested, so it keeps stuff constant, like in real science.
- I will not explain how it works, but I will explain the intuition of the results.
 - Basically, we can run these models and see whether or not we can accept or reject our null or alternative hypotheses
 - I won't go through the numbers and cutoffs I use, you'll just have to trust me and my Science degree in Mathematical Economics and Applied Statistics:



Exploring: Runtime

Minimum: 1 Minute
Maximum: 40 minutes

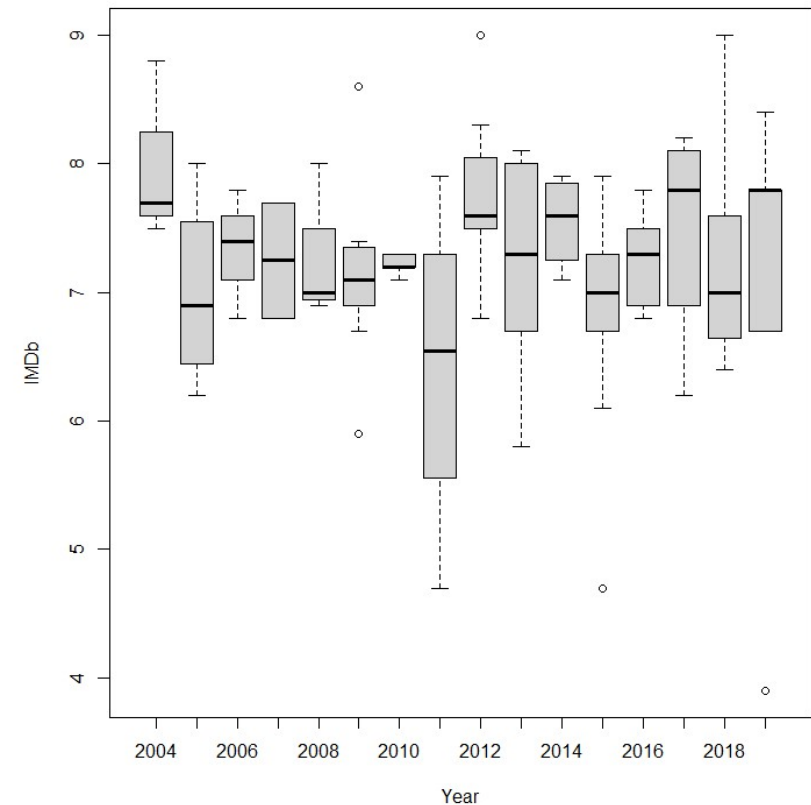
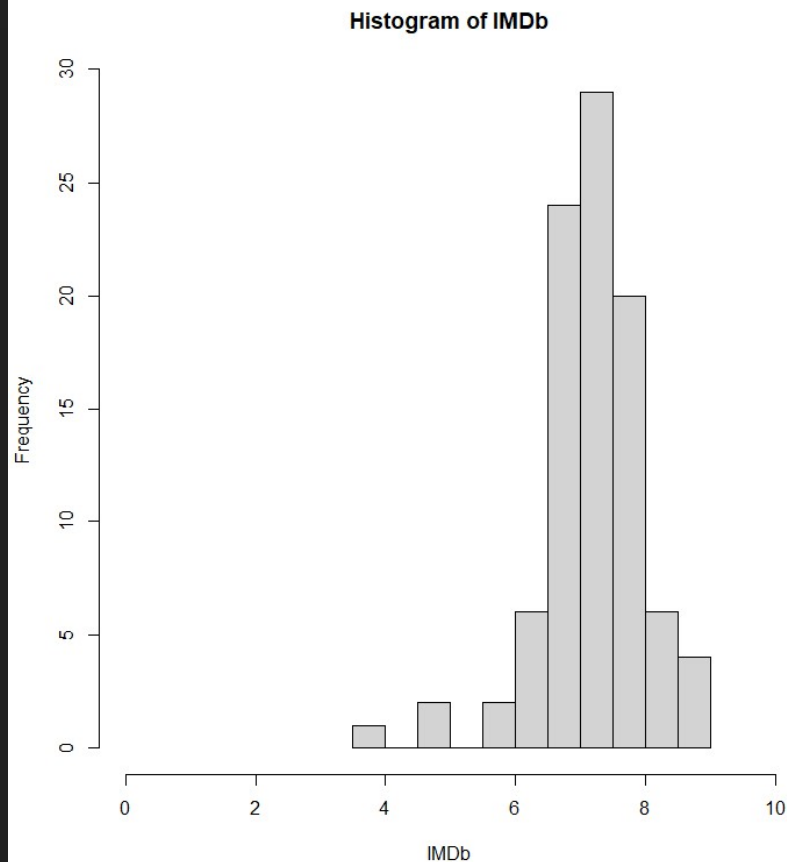
Mean: 14.14 minutes
Median: 13



Exploring: IMDb Ratings

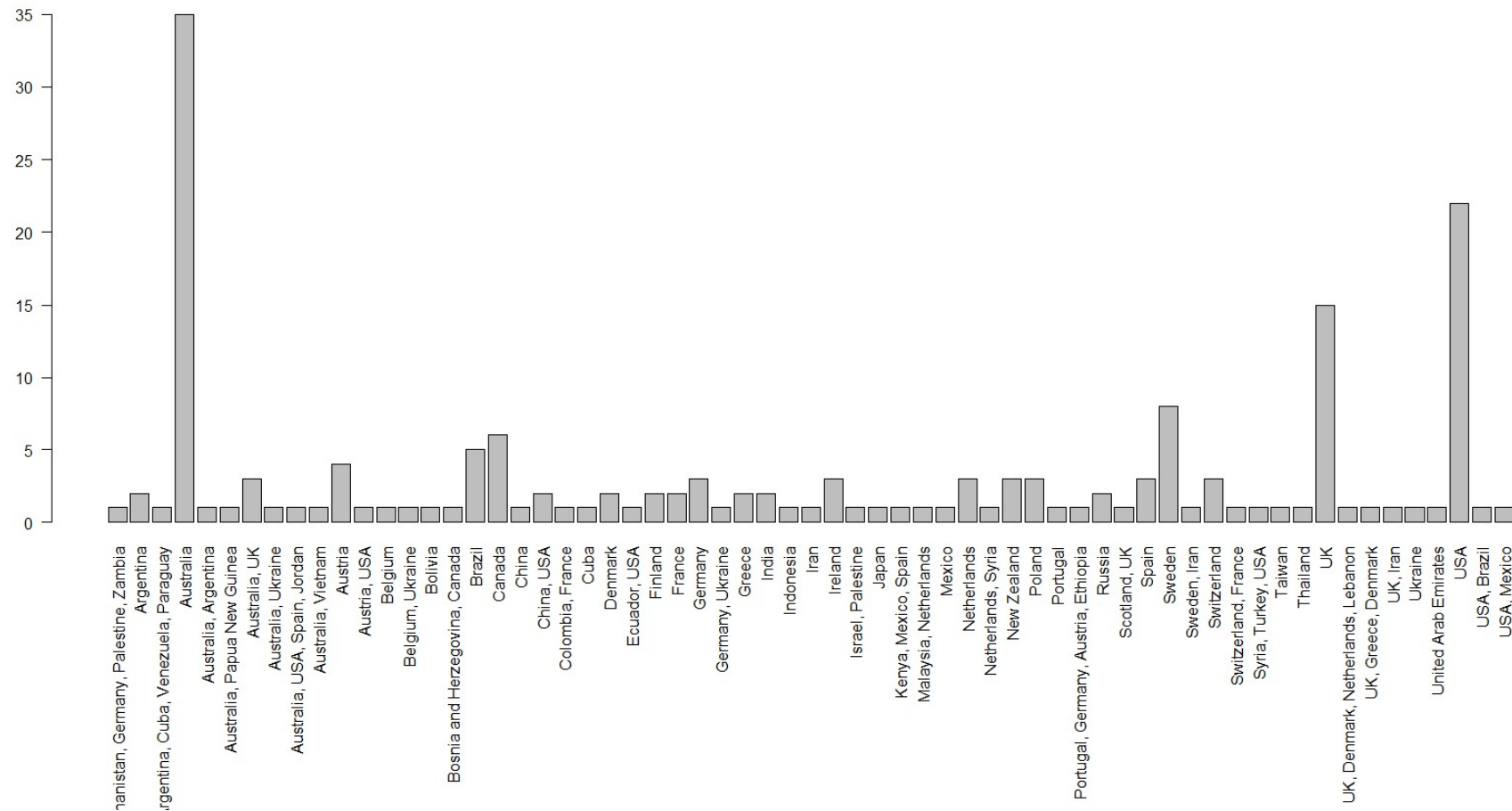
Minimum: 3.9
Maximum: 9

Mean: 7.219
Median: 7.25



Exploring: Nationality

1st: Australia
2nd: USA
3rd: UK
4th: Sweden (lol hello)



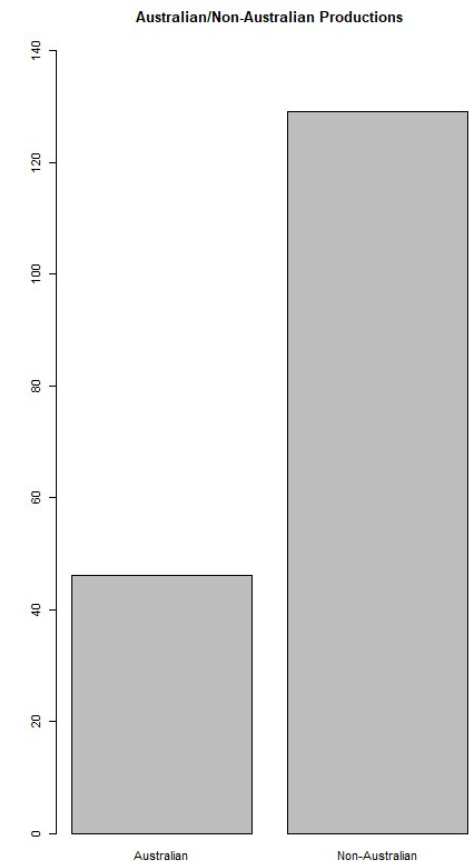
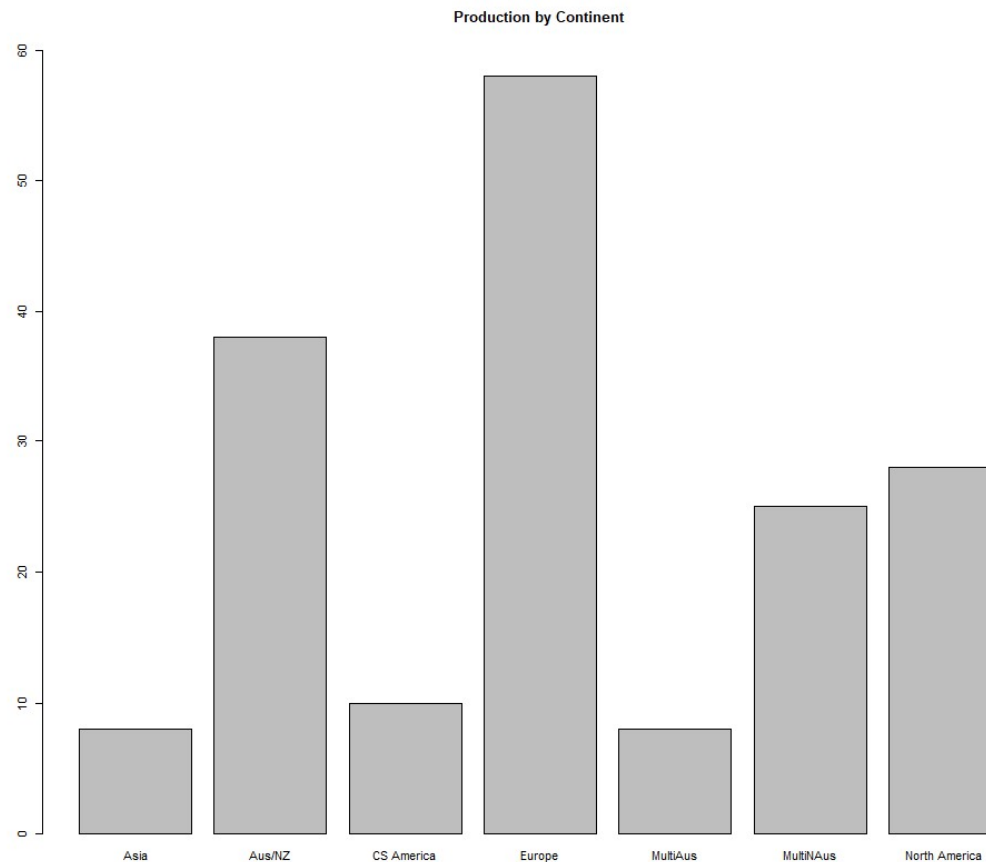
Exploring: Nationality

Europe: 58
Aus/NZ: 38
North America: 28

46 Australian films
overall

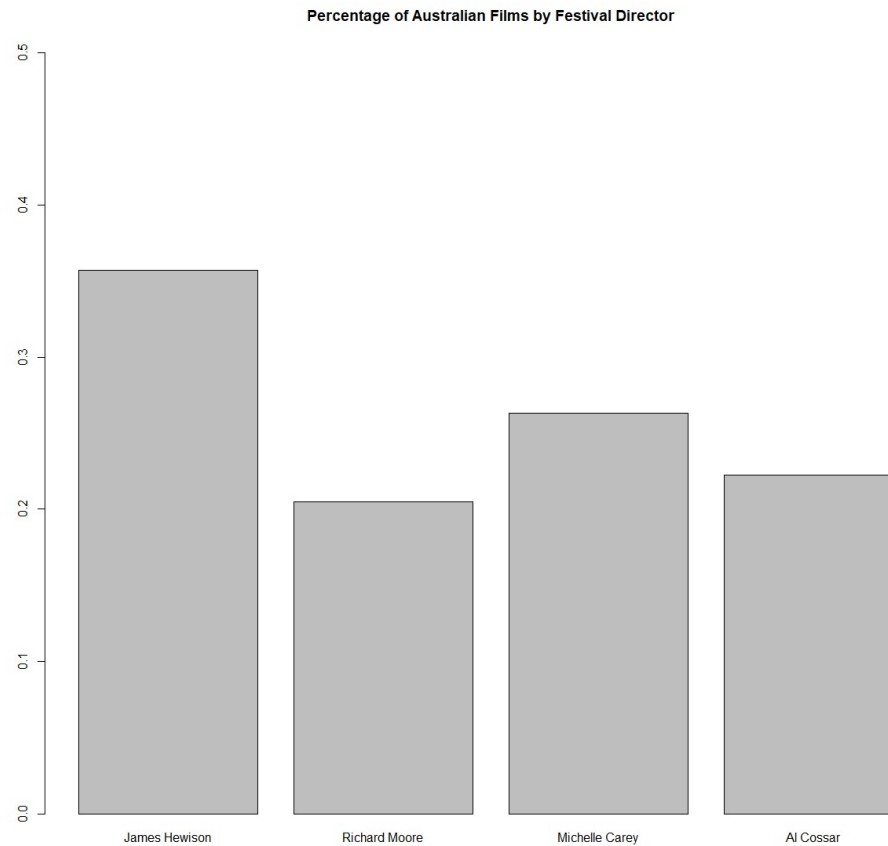
129 Non-Australian
Films overall

Australian doco shorts
Make up 26.3% of
All doco shorts in MIFF



Exploring: Nationality

James Hewison has the highest percentage of Australian Doco Shorts programmed (35.7%), followed by Michelle Carey (26.3%), followed by Al Cossar (22.2%) followed by Richard Moore (20.5%)



Exploring: Language

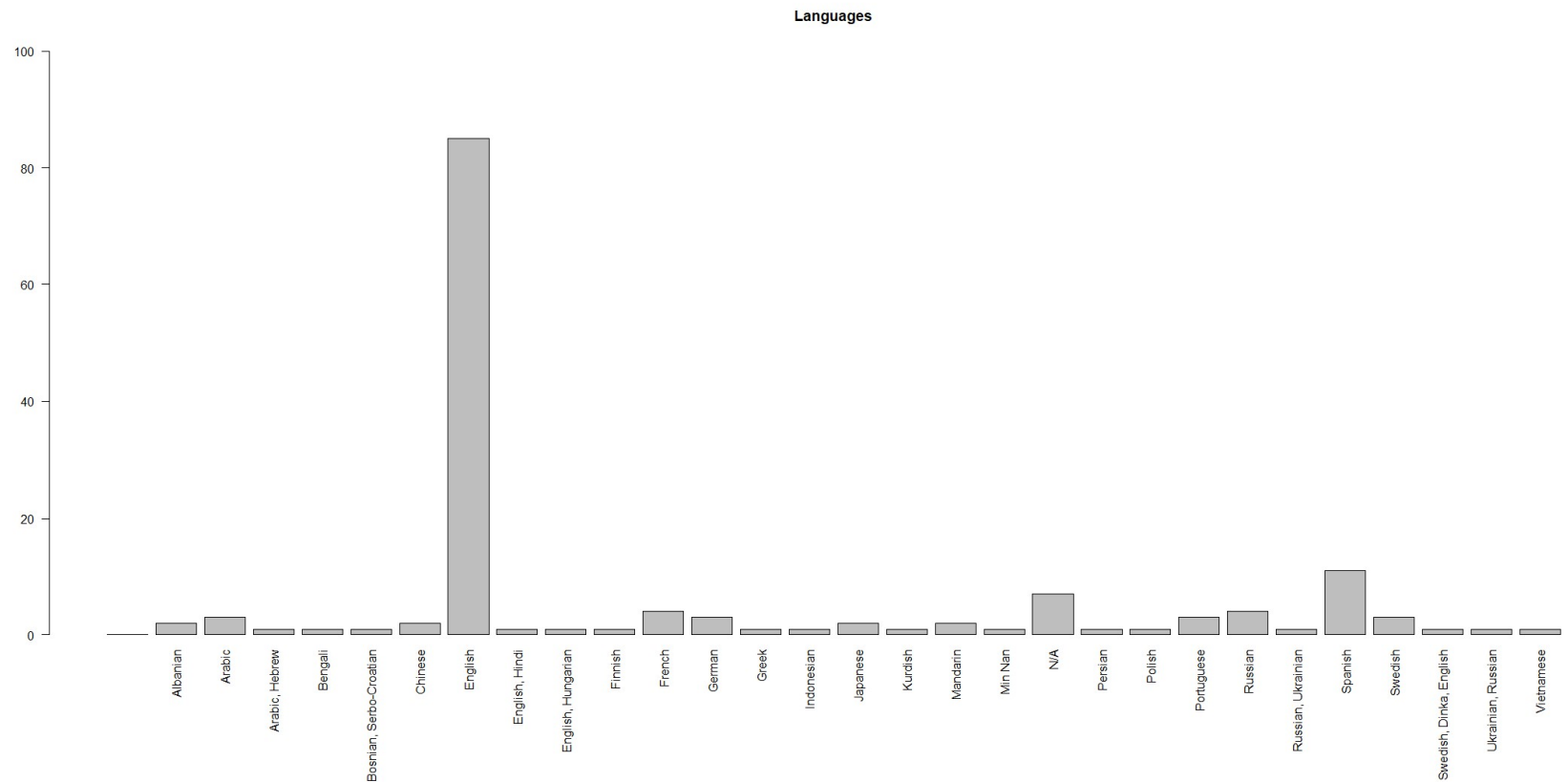
Vast majority of films are in English (85).

2nd is Spanish (11)

3rd is Silent/No Dialogue (7)

4th is French (4)

May be a skew in data (will elaborate in limitations)



Exploring: Winners

- 50% of these winners are Australian (some years I could not find data for a winner)
- The majority are in English (64%)
- Interestingly, the average runtime is significantly higher (Mean 18.57 compared to 14.14)
 - (Also it's definitely statistically significantly different because I did a t-test)

Title	Director	Year at MIFF	Nationality	Runtime (mins)	Language	IMDb Rating
Yellow Fella	Ivan Sen	2005	Australia	25	English	8
My Brother Vinnie	Steven McGregor	2006	Australia	25	English	7.4
DANCE LIKE YOUR OLD MAN	Gideon Obarzanek, Edwina Throsby	2007	Australia	10	English	
HEART	Amy Gebhardt	2008	Australia	26	English	
The Mystery Of Flying Kicks	Matthew Bate	2010	Australia, USA, Spain, Jordan	14	English	7.2
Leonids Story	Rainer Ludwigs	2011	Germany, Ukraine	19	Russian	7.9
Paradise	Nadav Kurtz	2012	USA	10	Spanish	7.5
Recollections	Nathanael Carton	2013	Japan	13	Japanese	8.1
The Last Days of Peter Bergmann	Ciaran Cassidy	2014	Ireland	19	English	7.8
Nowhere Line						
Voices from Manus Island	Lukas Schrank	2015	Australia	15	English	7.1
Fairy Tales	Rongfei Guo	2016	China, USA	36	Chinese	
The Rabbit Hunt	Patrick Bresnan	2017	USA	12	English	6.9
Black Line	Francesca Scalisi	2018	Switzerland	11	Bengali	6.5
Lost Rambos	Chris Phillips	2019	Australia, Papua New Guinea	25	English	7.8

Q1) Are there actually less and less Australian films over time?

- Cannot reject the null: Not enough evidence to show that there is a significant relationship between Festival Director and Australian Film

```
> modelaus1=glm(Australian~MIFF.Festival.Director, data=MIFFData3, family=binomial(link=logit))
> summary(modelaus1)
```

Call:
glm(formula = Australian ~ MIFF.Festival.Director, family = binomial(link = logit),
data = MIFFData3)

Deviance Residuals:

Min	1Q	Median	3Q	Max
-0.9619	-0.7815	-0.7090	1.4094	1.7815

Coefficients:

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(> z)
(Intercept)	-1.2528	0.8018	-1.562	0.118
MIFF.Festival.DirectorJames Hewison	0.7221	0.8954	0.807	0.420
MIFF.Festival.DirectorMichelle Carey	0.2231	0.8350	0.267	0.789
MIFF.Festival.DirectorRichard Moore	-0.1054	0.8846	-0.119	0.905

(Dispersion parameter for binomial family taken to be 1)

Null deviance: 201.61 on 174 degrees of freedom
Residual deviance: 199.22 on 171 degrees of freedom
(1 observation deleted due to missingness)
AIC: 207.22

Number of Fisher Scoring iterations: 4

Q1) Are there actually less and less Australian films over time? Cont'd.

- Cannot reject the null: Not enough evidence to show a trend in any direction for Australian Doco Shorts over time.

```
> modelaus2=glm(Australian~Year, data=MIFFData3, family=binomial(link=logit))
> summary(modelaus2)
```

Call:

```
glm(formula = Australian ~ Year, family = binomial(link = logit),
     data = MIFFData3)
```

Deviance Residuals:

Min	1Q	Median	3Q	Max
-0.8563	-0.8072	-0.7508	1.5496	1.7259

Coefficients:

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(> z)
(Intercept)	55.20143	75.71172	0.729	0.466
Year	-0.02795	0.03764	-0.743	0.458

(Dispersion parameter for binomial family taken to be 1)

Null deviance: 201.61 on 174 degrees of freedom
Residual deviance: 201.06 on 173 degrees of freedom
(1 observation deleted due to missingness)
AIC: 205.06

Number of Fisher Scoring iterations: 4

Q2) Can we predict a winner?

- Actually, maybe a little bit!
- Between 2004 to 2019, it actually turns out that there is a significant increase in probability of a doco short being a winner if it is Australian/NZ, either entirely domestically or as a co-production.
 - Essentially, if you get in as an Australian Short Documentary, then you have a better chance of winning than otherwise.
 - Everything else is garbage and not helpful (even IMDb rating, which I think is hilarious. MIFF clearly doesn't pick above average films as winners)
 - Even though we determined that the runtime the winners was statistically significantly different from the average, there is not enough evidence to show that a longer runtime increases chances of winning.

```
> modelwin=glm(Won~IMDb+Time2+Eng+Australian, family=binomial(link=logit))
> summary(modelwin)
```

Call:
glm(formula = Won ~ IMDb + Time2 + Eng + Australian, family = binomial(link = logit))

Deviance Residuals:

Min	1Q	Median	3Q	Max
-1.0586	-0.5065	-0.3748	-0.2801	2.5957

Coefficients:

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(> z)
(Intercept)	-6.6977	3.6763	-1.822	0.0685 .
IMDb	0.5743	0.4901	1.172	0.2413
Time2	0.7044	0.6897	1.021	0.3072
Eng	-0.5985	0.7614	-0.786	0.4319
Australian	1.7118	0.7576	2.259	0.0239 *

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

(Dispersion parameter for binomial family taken to be 1)

Null deviance:	67.608	on 92	degrees of freedom
Residual deviance:	60.442	on 88	degrees of freedom
(83 observations deleted due to missingness)			
AIC:	70.442		

Number of Fisher Scoring iterations: 5

Limitations

- VERY SKETCHY DATA: Numerous clerical errors on MIFF's behalf
 - Oil (2004) had NO information and I couldn't find any on the internet either.
 - In fact, all of 2004 only had title, country, and runtime. I had to google every single other bit of metadata separately
 - Also no consistency in how doco shorts were labelled. In some years, there were no delineations between categories. I had to go through EACH FILM in 2014 since everything was labelled as "Featured in MIFF 2014" which is supremely unhelpful.
 - ALSO, if you go to MIFF2004, click "Full Program", takes you to MIFF2003!! What nonsense!!!!!!
 - I HAD TO CROSSCHECK EVERYTHING THROUGH GOOGLE, AND EVEN THEN, GOOGLE AND IMDB SOMETIMES GOT THINGS WRONG OR WOULD CONTRADICT THEMSELVES
 - Also IMDb seems to think the majority of these films are in English, but a lot of them are from non-English speaking countries, and almost all the films I could not find language information for were from non-English speaking countries.
 - Ultimately disregard the exploratory data on Language, but the other analysis is unaffected, and it was likely that the majority of the films were in English anyway, given that Australia, UK and US were the top 3 production countries.

Oil (2004) (Brazil)
MIFF 2004
Dir.

Select Festival
Any

Search the film archive

Film Title
Director
Country

Search

Browse By Director
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P
Q R S T U V W X Y Z
Show All

MIFF 2014 Film Archive

Viewing films where Festival year is "2014"

TIL MADNESS DO US PART Dir. Wang Bing Featured in MIFF 2014	10,000 KM Dir. Carlos Marques-Marcet Featured in MIFF 2014	112 WEDDINGS Dir. Doug Block Featured in MIFF 2014
20,000 DAYS ON EARTH Dir. Iain Forsyth, Jane Pollard Featured in MIFF 2014	457 Broadway Dir. Tomonari Nishikawa Featured in MIFF 2014	A GIRL AT MY DOOR Dir. July Jung Featured in MIFF 2014
A HARD DAY Dir. Kim Song-hun Featured in MIFF 2014	A Million Miles Away Dir. Jennifer Reeder Featured in MIFF 2014	A Single Body Dir. Sotiris Dounoukos Featured in MIFF 2014
A SPELL TO WARD OFF THE DARKNESS Dir. Ben Rivers, Ben Russell Featured in MIFF 2014	A THOUSAND SUNS Dir. Mati Diop Featured in MIFF 2014	ABUSE OF WEAKNESS Dir. Catherine Breillat Featured in MIFF 2014
ACCELERATOR 1 Featured in MIFF 2014	ACCELERATOR 2 Featured in MIFF 2014	ACTING MASTERCLASS: TERRY NORRIS Featured in MIFF 2014
Acts of God Dir. Sarah-Jane Woulahan Featured in MIFF 2014	Adrian Wootton: HUMPHREY BOGART Featured in MIFF 2014	Adrian Wootton: JOHN LE CARRE Featured in MIFF 2014
Adrian Wootton: KATHARINE HEPBURN Featured in MIFF 2014	Adrian Wootton: PATRICIA HIGHSMITH Featured in MIFF 2014	ADVANCED STYLE Dir. Lina Plioplyte Featured in MIFF 2014
AFLECTED Dir. Cliff Prowse, Derek Lee Featured in MIFF 2014	Afronauts Dir. Frances Bodomo Featured in MIFF 2014	Amanda F---ing Palmer On the Rocks Dir. Ondi Timoner Featured in MIFF 2014
AMONG THE LIVING Dir. Alexandre Bustillo, Julien Maury Featured in MIFF 2014	AMOUR FOU Dir. Jessica Hausner Featured in MIFF 2014	An Extraordinary Person Dir. Monia Chokri Featured in MIFF 2014
AN HONEST LIAR Dir. Justin Weinstein, Tyler Meason Featured in MIFF 2014	Angélique's Day for Night Dir. Joris Clerté, Pierre-Emmanuel Lyet Featured in MIFF 2014	ANIMATION SHORTS Featured in MIFF 2014

Limitations

- Additionally, not a very interesting timeframe. Only chosen out of pragmatism since 2004 was the first year that a Documentary Shorts program was properly archived in the MIFF archive.
- There would be far more interesting trends across time if data from 1952 onwards was more easily accessible.
 - For example, it seems as if a huge amount of films in MIFF in the early years were Documentary (or Scientific or Amateur films), since, I assume, motion pictures were more of a rarity, and literally anything with sync-sound at an amateur level was mindblowing entertainment.
 - This would require a lot of manual coding, as well as, ideally, a lot of primary source cross-checking, given how godawfully inaccurate the MIFF Archive has been.

MIFF 1952 Film Archive

Viewing films where Festival year is "1952"

EARTH
Dir. Alexander Dovzhenko
USSR – 1930
Featured in MIFF1952

LA BELLE ET LA BÊTE
Dir. Emile Darbon, Jean Cocteau
France – 1946
Featured in MIFF1952

MIKE AND STEFANI
Dir. R. Maslyn Williams
Australia – 1952
Featured in MIFF1952

Jaef's Nail
Dir. Stoke-on-Trent Amateur Cine Society
Featured in MIFF1952, Amateur Films

Six Minutes With Nature
Dir. W. G. Nicholls
Australia
Featured in MIFF1952, Amateur Films

Quiet Afternoon
Dir. K. F. Hall
Australia
Featured in MIFF1952, Amateur Films

Make Mine Movies
Dir. A. T. Bartlett
Australia
Featured in MIFF1952, Amateur Films

Out for Lunch
Dir. L. Montague
Australia
Featured in MIFF1952, Amateur Films

Give us this Day
Dir. A. T. Bartlett
Australia
Featured in MIFF1952, Amateur Films

Tinglewood
Dir. R. G. Button
Australia
Featured in MIFF1952, Amateur Films

Tasmania, Scenic Isle
Dir. J. H. Taylor
Australia
Featured in MIFF1952, Amateur Films

School Days
Dir. J. H. Taylor
Australia
Featured in MIFF1952, Amateur Films

Home Brew
Dir. South Australian Amateur Cine Society
Australia
Featured in MIFF1952, Amateur Films

Explosions on the Sun
Dir. Division of Radiophysics C.S.I.R.O.
Australia
Featured in MIFF1952, Scientific Films

Spreading Wing
Dir. United States Information Services
USA
Featured in MIFF1952, Scientific Films

Movements of the Tongue in Speech
Featured in MIFF1952, Scientific Films

Volcanic Action in Hawaii
Featured in MIFF1952, Scientific Films

High-speed Cinematography of Gun Mechanisms
Dir. Dr. Lewis
Australia
Featured in MIFF1952, Scientific Films

Report from the Sea Bed
Dir. Naval Research Laboratories
UK
Featured in MIFF1952, Scientific Films

ROCKET FLIGHT
Dir. Intelligence Branch, Air Ministry
UK
Featured in MIFF1952, Scientific Films

Functional Photography
Dir. Eastman Kodak
Featured in MIFF1952, Scientific Films

Conclusion

- MIFF's archive is horrendous and not suitable for meaningful research.
- I'm not even sure what it's for since it's so shit.
- Maybe so that directors can google themselves later? But that's not useful.

Conclusion

- Anyway, Steve's wrong.
 - Not only can we not conclusively say that the number of Australian Doco Shorts in MIFF has decreased between 2004-2019, but Australian Doco Shorts are also far more likely to win.
 - Also, we are the most prolific entrant by Nation (although definitely not the majority by Continent, but that's a very different measure).
 - What seems to have happened, is that Doco Shorts are peppered throughout the program rather than in one neat block as is suggested by the programming, titling, and language used by the MIFF festival programs over the years. There seems to be a lot more Australian short docs that aren't part of the "doco shorts" program.
- I'm still mad that my computer somehow managed to delete all my work and I'm not sure what happened.



THE END

Questions?