The Wayward Scholar: Resources and Research in Popular Culture

GORDON STEVENSON

Who else but Archie Bunker, the star of the popular television show “All in the Family,” could supply just the right touch with which to begin a serious discussion of popular culture, especially one addressed to an academic readership which is largely dedicated to the preservation of high culture? Archie is anti-intellectual, ultraconservative, uncultured, and dogmatic. He is narrow-minded and prejudiced, he is the victim of a mean little world over which he has no control, and he has no sense of history whatsoever. It is to change the behavior of the real-life counterparts of this strange, angry man that we have constructed an expensive, complex and exceedingly vast system of education, and included in this system an equally vast subsystem of libraries. Archie Bunker, in other words, is the enemy. His wit and wisdom are quintessential pop culture of the most blatant variety. Among his numerous memorable utterances, I found this gem: “I didn’t insult the Defense Attorney. I just told him what I thought of pinko, bleeding-heart lawyers who get sentimental over killers.”

There is no doubt that many of my readers are firmly convinced that, figuratively speaking, popular culture is killing traditional values and ideologies, and there is no point in denying that there is something to be said for that line of reasoning. Furthermore, some of its byproducts may be having a murderous impact, literally, on a whole generation of America’s young people—at least this seems to be one interpretation of the evidence of recent research on the effects of media violence. I will not, therefore, get sentimental over all popular culture—just some of it. But I will defend it as a legitimate and important library resource, conceding at the start that most of what

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Norman Lear's bigoted, lower-class antihero has to say about the human condition is in atrociously bad taste; so is much popular culture, even some of the best of it. Who, then, might be interested in Archie's messages and their impact on society and its culture? I should think that he and the culture he represents have at least some implications for students and scholars of the following fields: social anthropology, political science, psychology, education, the mass media, social theory and cultural criticism, sociology of work and leisure, language, literature and drama, and advertising and marketing.

Lest some of this seem a bit farfetched, note that a fair number of sociologists and psychologists are interested in the nature and effects of humor; that political scientists are beginning to deal with the language of politics "as she is spoken" and documented in popular culture artifacts; that anthropologists, although they have not lost interest in Samoa and New Guinea, are turning also to contemporary cultures in complex industrialized communities (including the United States). In developing their system of monitoring society with cultural indicators, George Gerbner and his colleagues at the Annenberg School of Communications use television content as a basic source of data. Students of nonverbal communications (which has developed rapidly into a major subdiscipline) will find in television a rich source of data, for this medium raises fascinating questions about the learning of behavior. There may be yet other disciplines which have reason to be concerned somehow with Archie's life and times, e.g., students of black studies, women's studies, and perhaps even of theology, for at least one book—a popular one—has been written about the theology of Bunkerism. But why might librarians be interested?

Whatever reasons are given for the existence of libraries, no one to my knowledge has ever argued that they exist in order to perpetuate bad taste, to preserve the mediocre and the worst of society's intellectual and artistic endeavors, or to undermine the foundations of Western civilization. It is quite unthinkable that the cultural objectives of the library would include the promotion of mental illness and moral decay. These are some of the more frightening effects widely attributed to much of that large mass of books, periodicals, sound recordings, films, and television shows which is annually consumed by the American public. Because of their real or imagined antisocial consequences, because they seem to be quite ephemeral, and especially because the quality of their intellectual content is thought to be far below standards suitable for any respectable academic institution,
few librarians have gone out of their way to collect systematically such resources as comic books, big-little books, confession magazines, paperback thrillers, recordings of country and western music, bumper stickers, bubblegum cards, recordings of radio soap operas, tapes of popular television shows, fanzines, or Polish jokes.

One simply does not expect to find the *œuvres complètes* of even such seminal figures as Elvis Presley or Gene Autry in a major academic library. It is some measure of where we stand that even the idea of finding them in an academic library strikes one as amusing. One would also be at least mildly taken aback to find, for instance, a complete—or even selective—set of recordings of the original radio broadcasts of the “Lone Ranger.” The average music bibliographer could not care less who plays third trumpet on Fletcher Henderson’s 1925 recording of “Sugar Foot Stomp,” no matter how highly the artistry of this musician may be treasured by a jazz historian. The loftier aims of libraries notwithstanding, one suspects that the reason we do not acquire these kinds of things is the pragmatic one that the audiences we serve have not asked for them in any significant quantity, if at all.

Complaints from the academic community about current library policies in these matters do not seem to be very numerous or particularly serious, although the following remarks of Leslie Fiedler may portend a more vigorous evaluation of our conventional ways of doing things:

Initially, men of good will, at least, read or listened to all song and story before thus classifying it [in terms of status and audience]. But we have reached a point at which some among us aspire to ghettoize certain writers, certain books, certain whole sub-genres of the novel before reading them. Indeed, in a world where division of labour and delegation of responsibility have been carried to absurd extremes, certain professionals and sub-professionals have been trained to do that job for the rest of us. In the United States, for instance, and elsewhere I suspect, librarians have learned to relegate some books, as they arrive at the order desk to ghettostacks as “Juveniles,” “Teen-Age Fiction,” “Detective Stories,” “Westerns,” “Science Fiction”—or to a super-Ghetto, locked and guarded, as “Pornography.” . . . Finally, there are more marginal fictions which do not make it to this level of discrimination, being excluded from even temporary storage and discriminatory display by most American libraries. This ultimately untouchable category includes “pa-
perback originals" of all kinds, and most notably comic books; though the latter, among children and young adults at least, are probably the most widely read of all narrative forms.

Such generic pre-censorship—or, if that be too strong a term, pejorative pre-classification—provides an easy way out for relatively unsophisticated and fundamentally insecure librarians or bookstore clerks. And who can blame them, trapped as they are in an unworkable system.8

Academic librarians might very well disagree with Fiedler and argue that the situation is precisely as it should be, for the popular culture/entertainment industries will surely survive without the help of librarians or the resources of higher education. It is even possible that they will survive without the help of Leslie Fiedler; and if last year's popular culture is quickly forgotten, the loss will be one which most people can survive without undue hardship. Furthermore, the popular culture industries are in competition with, and constitute a serious threat to, those with professional interests in the art, drama, literature, and music which have found a home in higher education. As to research, the popular culture industries do their own research in the areas which are important to them, principally research in marketing, advertising and consumer psychology. They are not even remotely interested in what librarians and professors are doing. If the industries have contacts with higher education, they are more likely to be with the school of business than with the library or departments of the humanities. There are, however, other factors to be considered.

Besides whatever long-range responsibilities librarians have to document our times (constructing that social memory, which has long been considered to be one of the more enduring cultural functions of the library), there are the practical issues of dealing with the demands of faculties and students as the library responds to or anticipates the changing climate of research and teaching. There is some very persuasive evidence that this climate is changing, and that Leslie Fiedler's generalizations are not too far off the mark. If he is representative of a trend in higher education, it is time to take another look at popular culture. The justification for the present survey is that during the past decade there has indeed been a considerable shift in the relationship between popular culture and academic scholarship. This shift is likely to have an impact on libraries and the nature of their resources.
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THE RISE OF POPULAR CULTURE STUDIES

Some ten years ago, when *Library Trends* published a monumental, two-volume survey of the "current state and future outlook" of "every major area of bibliography," popular culture was not dealt with as a separate area, and was hardly mentioned in the extensive discipline-oriented surveys.9 Indeed, at that time it was hardly necessary to do much with the bibliography of popular culture for the simple reason that the academic audience for such materials did not have a high degree of visibility. But in the same year that the *Library Trends* survey was published (1967), Ray B. Browne left Purdue University and went to Bowling Green State University in Ohio. There, he became professor of popular culture and English and, among other things, established the Department of Popular Culture, the Center for the Study of Popular Culture, and the Popular Press. In that year he also published the first issue of the *Journal of Popular Culture*.10 Since then, popular culture studies have made extraordinary progress.

A conservative estimate of the number of scholars now interested in popular culture, as a central function of their research or as a tangential or occasional resource, would probably be as high as 1,500. If we enlarge our population to include those who teach popular culture in secondary schools and undergraduate departments of colleges and universities (and are therefore interested in both popular culture resources and results of popular culture research), the figure would probably reach 2,500. This group includes a wide variety of academic types, quite disparate in their interests and academic backgrounds. They are frequently at odds with each other and cannot seem to come to a general consensus as to exactly what it is they are trying to do or how to go about doing it. Their present condition, although for the most part healthy and vigorous, shows certain symptoms not unlike those evident in students of American studies, i.e. these scholars and teachers are debating whether the study of popular culture "is a discipline, whether it can develop a method, and whether it should develop a method."11 What they have in common is a belief in the monumental importance of popular culture and an unwillingness to accept the usual evaluations of its nature, quality and social effects. They are doing their best to make the study of popular culture a legitimate academic discipline.

In some established academic departments, this movement clearly constitutes a threat from within. It is one thing to have to contend with those forces of mass communication which rage untrammeled...
outside the walls of academia. It is another to be challenged by one's colleagues. A scholar who has, for example, spent his or her life studying the works of Beethoven does not take kindly to the suggestion that a study of the Beatles should have an academic priority comparable to that accorded Beethoven. Unfortunately, this is the case, even though the Beatles may have claimed our attention for reasons quite different from those which drew us to Beethoven. In other words, we are dealing with a topic which is controversial and has been known to have internal political ramifications.

Only recently have some of these wayward scholars organized themselves into a professional organization, the Popular Culture Association (PCA), which was founded in 1969. The parameters of the study of popular culture are not set by the PCA, but its stated aims are as succinct a rationale for the study of popular culture as one will find:

The Popular Culture Association was founded to study thoroughly and seriously those productions, both artistic and commercial, designed for mass consumption. The founders were convinced that this vast body of material encompassed in print, film, television, comics, advertising and graphics reflects the values, convictions, and patterns of thought and feeling generally dispersed through and approved by American society.12

There is in this statement no suggestion that these artistic and commercial products and the values they reflect necessarily constitute a cultural pathology. In any case, the aims of the PCA must have touched a latent vein of dissatisfaction or restlessness, for the PCA soon found recruits from a wide spectrum of academic disciplines. The somewhat confusing, if not chaotic, state of higher education in the late 1960s and early 1970s provided a fertile ground for the rapid growth of popular culture studies: the studies were unconventional, they challenged traditional academic values, they were aesthetically neutral (if not biased in favor of popular culture), and they were concerned with cultural experiences which were intrinsic to the lives of most students. Furthermore, some types of popular culture could clearly be defined as minority cultures, thus reflecting non-WASP values, which were of particular interest at a time when various minority studies programs were being established in universities.

When members of this new interdisciplinary association met in Chicago in April 1976 for their sixth annual convention, hundreds of students and scholars participated in 114 sessions during which they
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read, listened to, and sometimes discussed approximately 400 papers. If this seems like a very large number of scholarly papers for a three-day meeting of a relatively small professional organization, keep in mind what the popular culture scholar has to deal with. Because the production and diffusion of popular culture is serious business, vigorously pursued for profit in most advanced and advancing nations of the world, the annual output of printed and broadcast material is staggering in both its extent and its diversity.

In trying to make a case for the thorough and systematic preservation of popular culture, little would be gained by arguing that some of it is good (i.e. aesthetically satisfying and worthy of serious criticism and analysis) by citing selected works by the few writers, artists, and musicians who somehow have managed to transcend the strictures of their medium and the limitations of their audience to create works of permanent value. Librarians have done this in the past, and are doing it now. It is a perfectly sound policy in many situations, and I will comment on it further below. To confront the most basic issue surrounding libraries and popular culture however—and I take this to be the necessity of abandoning or drastically restructuring our traditional qualitative standards of collection building—we need to face the fact that we are dealing with some very down-to-earth material: the kinds of books and magazines sold at drugstore news counters, morning and afternoon television, and drive-in movies. Readers who have lost touch with some of the earthier aspects of middle- and lower-class popular culture, should look at the advertisements in any recent issue of a magazine such as True Confessions, listen to some of the recordings of Tanya Tucker, make a field trip to a "disco bar" or a rock concert, and spend several afternoons watching television soap operas.

A few random comments on some of this flotsam and jetsam, the physical remains of one year's tidal wave of popular culture, provide the best place to begin in considering the interdependencies between research libraries and the scholar of popular culture. If some of what follows seems completely irrelevant to the issue at hand, bear with me, keeping in mind that standards of artistic quality and literary merit, moral judgments, and personal tastes have little, if anything, to do with the validity of research data.
TRENDS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

During the year that had passed between the fifth and sixth annual conventions of the PCA, approximately 250 new science fiction novels and short story collections were published in the United States, as well as somewhat larger quantities of detective, crime, and spy novels—but fewer gothic and Western novels. Hollywood produced slightly fewer than 200 feature-length commercial films (a surprisingly small output which in no way reflects the cultural impact of this medium). At a conservative estimate, there were approximately 20,000 hours of live network television broadcasting. There were large quantities of books on self-help, spiritual guidance, hobbies, sex, sadism, sports, cookery, and the occult. In order to expedite the diffusion of some of these materials to their various audiences, one Chicago book jobber—typical of the large wholesale paperback houses—helped “drugstore and variety chains establish ‘family reading centers,’” and provided a readers’ profile service based on computerized sales records.

Because of the spectacular rise in the sale of paperback books, the members of the American Book Publishers Association were convinced that people were reading more. Newspaper publishers, however, thought that people were reading less. Indeed, between 1973 and 1976 the audience for the American daily newspaper had declined by 2.1 million readers. The newer, more gaudy weeklies, such as the National Enquirer, increased their sales considerably.

There were thousands of new issues of comic books, and tens of thousands of new issues of popular magazines. However, less space was devoted to the funnies in the daily newspaper. Some of the classic strips, such as “Terry and the Pirates,” had ceased publication a few years previously. But there were many new strips, and some of the older ones, such as “Blondie” and “Dick Tracy,” had learned to survive in a world far different from the one into which they were born. It was an interesting comment on the times that many newspapers subscribed to syndicated reissues of “Little Orphan Annie,” the conservative, anti-New Deal strip written and drawn by Harold Gray for the Chicago Tribune in the 1920s and 1930s. “Nostalgia” (i.e. popular culture more than five years old) was big business. Apparently, all popular culture is not as ephemeral as we once thought it was. Much of it was reprocessed and repackaged in various formats.

Music, be it popular or not, remained a mysterious phenomenon,
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one that has never been adequately explained. The editor of the New England Journal of Medicine suggested that our propensity for musical sounds may have a basis, not so much in learned cultural behavior, as in human biology—in which case, music may ultimately be explained by the science of bioacoustics rather than by aesthetics. Perhaps this is why only people with serious hearing disabilities can escape the sounds of music. As it has for many decades, commercial popular music continues to attract an astonishing number of hopeful entrants in the Billboard magazine popularity contest (i.e. the weekly “Top Forty Charts” of bestselling sound recordings). To this end, according to Serge Denisoff, “50,000 song titles are released annually in the popular music market.”

The popular music of the United States continued to have a strong influence on the music of all but the most isolated countries of the world. John Darnton, a New York Times correspondent, reported on a new style of music found in Lagos, Nigeria: “Afro-Beat, New Music with Message.” Afro-beat is said to be a combination of African styles, rock music and jazz, all somehow fused with African “highlife music” (a semi-calypso music), Bob Dylan and James Brown. Such trends, although obviously accepted with much relish by the people involved, are considered by some ethnomusicologists to be nothing less than cultural rape. (Whether this stance emerges from a loathing for American popular music or a penchant for unadulterated source material is not clear.)

Always sensitive to the needs of a demanding public, the popular culture industry in the United States recognized a new genre of popular music identified as “disco music.” Disco music first appeared on the Billboard record charts in 1974, seems to have reached a peak in 1975, was the subject of a book in 1976, and (if we are lucky) may be forgotten by the end of 1977.

The U.S. Bicentennial was also the year that the television drama, “Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman,” survived its first season and took soap opera to new heights of relevancy (or depths of absurdity, depending on your point of view). “Beacon Hill,” hailed by its producers as a U.S. version of the British Broadcasting Corporation’s successful “Upstairs, Downstairs,” reached an audience of 16.5 million people, but even that huge audience was not enough to give it a winning slot in the Nielsen rating game. Capitalizing on the success of The Exorcist, movie producers went on a binge of occult film making. The movie version of Peter Benchley’s Jaws had passed its peak at the box office, and Hollywood producers were moving on to yet more
spectacular and chillingly realistic films of mayhem, disaster and death. Filmed sex and violence, frequently merging in explicit and brutal scenes of rape, became standard fare for the nation's moviegoers.

Serialized fiction, which had not been widely used on a regular basis in daily newspapers since the 1930s (except in the form of comic strips), was reintroduced by two West Coast publishers. Inspired by the success of television's "Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman," the publishers started "sob-sister serials" aimed at "the type of reader who gets turned on by non-news." The only topic off limits in the 500-word episodes of the serials is bondage. This could be the beginning of a new trend in newspaper publishing.

Students of communication found a new potential area of research with the rise of CB (citizens band radio transceiving). By the spring of 1976, CB had become the latest national fad (at the same time, but for reasons which remain obscure, there was a widespread revival of skateboarding). During the first twenty years of CB, the Federal Communications Commission received one million license applications; the second million were received in less than a year, between the fall of 1975 and the summer of 1976. An interesting form of person-to-person communication, CB was seen as a potential threat by some commercial radio broadcasters whose best broadcasting hours in terms of audience size (and therefore in terms of income) are those times when people are going to and from work in their cars (which means they are probably awake but are unable to watch television or read confession magazines). The rapid rise of CB was a typical popular culture phenomenon, and it is not clear what it means: Is it one more manifestation of contemporary alienation—lonely people trying to reach out and communicate with someone in the asphalt and concrete labyrinths of our nation's highways—or is CB only a harmless, insignificant new toy? How one answers this, or if one thinks it is worth answering, probably reveals something about one's attitude toward popular culture studies in general.

A WORLDWIDE PHENOMENON

Much of our popular culture, packaged in various printed and audiovisual formats, was diffused to the far corners of the earth. Abroad, in the hospitable climates of some countries of Western Europe, it flourished. In other, less hospitable and even alien environments, including those of the emerging countries of the Third
World, it contributed to the continuing process identified by some social scientists as "modernization" and by others as "the Americanization of the world." Telefilm was a major export item. No one knows exactly how much television in the form of film was exported; it has been estimated to be 100,000-200,000 hours annually.

American culture interacted with local value systems in other countries, and it is a reasonable hypothesis that it had an impact on changing lifestyles. For better or for worse, the world changed, however subtly, as the informational environment of millions of people in hundreds of countries was changed. As C.W.E. Bigsby wrote:

Moreover, in crossing the Atlantic, in spreading downward through South America, northward through Canada, or westward across the Pacific, American popular culture suffers a sea-change. Detached from the physical and psychic realities which gave it birth, it assumes a new identity. Changing shape at each cultural interface, it becomes, in effect, a Superculture, a reservoir of shifting values and images splashed like primary colours across the consciousness of the late twentieth century.

CRITICISM

As was to be expected, not everyone was happy about the trends in popular culture. The major sources of criticism, as identified by Gans, seemed to continue. On one hand, critics and scholars thought it was banal and vulgar, lacking in depth, and potentially dangerous to high culture. Another strand of criticism came from the lower and middle classes, who were more concerned with such issues as drugs, nudity, and antisocial or unconventional behavior. For example, Loretta Lynn's country and western song, "The Pill," which deals with extramarital activities of a lower middle-class housewife, was banned from many radio stations in 1975 and condemned from pulpits throughout middle America.

More relevant to the problems of academic libraries were the comments of the president of Stanford University, who described the reading of college students as "inhumane letters" and "junk." Scholars should be alarmed, he said, at the lists of campus bookstore bestsellers published in the Chronicle of Higher Education. Library Journal reported that he urged "scholars and librarians to adopt 'aesthetic conservatism' in evaluating new literature, demanding high quality that will last and 'calling sordidness by its right name.'"
Robert Brustein, dean of the School of Drama at Yale University, observed our society in his book, *The Culture Watch*, and was disturbed by “the dangerous symptoms of cultural leveling at work in America today.” In Thomas Meehan’s essentially negative review (“Pop-eyed Professors”) of a conference on political humor, Irving Howe of Columbia University was reported to have said: “I think that taking an owlish, pseudo-scholarly approach to, say Batman, as though it was Dante being studied, is clearly absurd.” The roots of these controversies run deep. One suspects that the rapid pace of cultural change widens the gap between different generations of scholars as well as between different generations of students and laypersons. The world’s first television generation (people now in their late twenties, who have lived all of their lives with television) has worked its way up through college, and some of its members are now entering the ranks of academic scholars and researchers. They bring to their work new outlooks and different values.

**TAKING POPULAR CULTURE SERIOUSLY**

**THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH**

All of the above—and much, much more, because my selective comments represent only the tips of several icebergs—has now become, in the words of the editor of this issue of *Library Trends*, “evidence” in that ever-elusive search for truth. A cursory survey of the list of topics discussed at any annual meeting of the PCA makes it quite clear that what librarians have traditionally identified as “trash,” “entertainment,” and “escape literature” are the basic resources of popular culture research. In fact, it seems that there is nothing too trivial, too banal or too trite to be excluded from the domain of the popular culture scholar.


Jungian, the monomyth, frequency distribution, detrimental cultural myth, the dialectic, structuralism, morphology—these terms suggest an essentially nonqualitative approach to popular culture phenomena. They also bespeak a seriousness of purpose appropriate to academic scholarship, although they do create jolting incongruities with the mundane nature of the sources.

LIBRARIANS

It is obvious that if academic librarians begin to take popular culture as seriously as some of these scholars, there are likely to be a number of complex problems of a practical nature which will have to be considered. Because we have been taught to exercise qualitative judgments in building collections, we will need to find new guidelines and strategies to provide alternatives to our traditional selection criteria.

There are three aspects of the serious interest in popular culture which can provide ways of examining its potential impact on libraries: (1) the distinct possibility that some popular culture may be creative enough (i.e. aesthetically, formally, etc.) to warrant its serious consideration on the basis of traditional standards of quality, (2) the pragmatic question of what is actually being taught in higher education, and (3) the equally pragmatic question of what materials are needed by scholars in their research. The first of these is familiar territory to librarians. In considering Fiedler's remarks quoted above,32 one could conclude that all he is asking is that we avoid the stereotyping of classes of literature (what he calls "generic pre-censorship" or "pejorative pre-classification"), and apply some standards when evaluating, for instance, a gothic novel, rather than rejecting it out of hand because it belongs to a class of literature labeled "Gothic Novels." The second aspect is related to the first to some extent, for in humanities departments we can expect to find more use of popular culture materials when and if more scholars are convinced that their quality warrants serious critical consideration.

As important from a practical point of view as these two aspects may be, in the long run the future shape of popular culture studies as a respectable discipline in the academic community will depend very
much on the quality of its research. Considering the comparatively recent rise of popular culture studies, a rather large amount of research has been produced.

RESEARCH

Four types of information are relevant to an examination of the relationship between popular culture research and the functions and services of research libraries: (1) the home disciplines or specialties of the researchers, (2) the types of topics studied, (3) the research methodologies, and (4) the types of resources used in research. Such categorization would be quite artificial in examining a well-established discipline, for research topic, method, and resources are all inter-related and emerge from the central questions asked by a discipline. Popular culture studies do not yet have this sort of unity; its scholars come from many different disciplines, bringing with them different perspectives and different assumptions. The questions asked by a historian are generally quite different from those asked by an anthropologist; the questions asked by a musicologist are generally different from those asked by a sociologist of leisure; nevertheless, scholars from all of these disciplines may be examining the same cultural phenomenon. For example, both Denisoff and the late T.W. Adorno have contributed to the sociology of music. Denisoff, at home in the sociology of the American empirical tradition, brings to popular music a perspective that is completely lacking in the work of Adorno. The latter, although both a musicologist of considerable standing and a sociologist closely associated with the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, brought to popular music the perspectives of the German musicologist, heavily burdened with essentially unprovable value assumptions and with not the slightest interest in empirical evidence. An American musicologist, Charles Hamm, commented on the "social, political, and cultural processes that distinguish twentieth-century music," and his approach was related neither to Denisoff nor to Adorno. Hamm did not refer to the considerable amount of literature devoted to his topic in the sociological journals. Such varying approaches can not always be predicated on the basis of the disciplinary backgrounds of researchers. They are, in any case, of some importance in getting a picture of the current locus of popular culture research, and the likely future shape of the discipline.
The home disciplines of the membership of the PCA have not yet been analyzed in detail. However, a reasonable index to these disciplines would seem to be possible from an examination of the disciplinary sources of material published in the *Journal of Popular Culture*, which has been the official organ of the PCA since 1969. At the completion of the first five volumes of the *Journal* (1967-71), Lohof made a quantitative analysis of their contents to identify trends and characteristics of popular culture studies. Of the 281 articles published during these years, the home disciplines of all but 39 (13.9 percent) of the contributors were identified. He found authors representing fourteen disciplines or categories of disciplines: anthropology, English, communications, folklore, history, interdisciplinary studies, law, modern languages, music, natural/physical sciences, political science, psychology, sociology, and "religion and/or philosophy." The discipline contributing the most authors to the *Journal* was English, with 114 contributors (40.6 percent of the total); the second largest number of contributors was from history, with 43 (15.3 percent). The category identified as religion and/or philosophy accounted for thirty-nine authors (13.9 percent). Various interdisciplinary studies (not specifically identified by Lohof, but probably heavy in American studies) accounted for thirty-three authors (11.7 percent). The contributions from sociology were few in number (twenty articles, or 7.1 percent). Each of the other disciplines supplied less than 2.5 percent of the total contributors.

Although the major trend is quite clear, some caution is needed in attempting more subtle analyses. Even the picture of the PCA which emerges from this data cannot be considered in any way definitive, for there are many other outlets for published research available to the membership. In fact, two of these outlets are closely associated with the PCA, and may have drained off material from the *Journal: The Journal of Popular Film*, which began publication in early 1972, and *Popular Music and Society*, which began publication in the fall of 1971.

The whole area needs more thorough study. The fact that a scholar is identified with English, history or sociology does not necessarily mean that that scholar will in fact use literary, historical, or sociological topics and approaches. The large number of scholars from English and history surely helps to set the tone of the PCA, but one also wonders if many of these people, although intellectually committed to
popular culture, are bound to their traditional disciplines for practical reasons. It does seem clear, however, that scholars of English tend to deal with forms of fiction in different media (the printed word, narrative drawings as in comic books, movies, and television shows); yet this is not always the case. Sometimes the topic discussed is so removed from the home discipline of the author (e.g., a lawyer discussing popular fiction) that the connection between topic and discipline has little significance. Yet this, too, can be deceptive. When one learns that a professor of religion and a professor of philosophy have collaborated on a study of those astonishing spectacles known as “demolition derbies” and the television show “Truth or Consequences,” one wonders what is happening. What is happening, in this case, is an examination of these events as specific examples of a general class of secular rituals, actually reversal rituals, which function to support traditional values while appearing to do the exact opposite.38

When we begin to go beyond the membership of the PCA and its contribution to the Journal, we are frustrated by the large number of scholarly journals which are likely to contain relevant sources. The real problem here is less one of identifying disciplinary sources than it is of bibliographical control. Both before and after the founding of the Journal of Popular Culture, journals of sociology, anthropology and communications have found room for popular culture research.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

Questions about popular culture relate to its origins, form, content, diffusion, effects, and use. It is my impression that none of the questions asked of popular culture are new, for such questions have been asked of other phenomena by the relatively traditional disciplines and subdisciplines. The unique feature of popular culture studies is simply that these questions have not been asked consistently, objectively and systematically of popular culture before—or, if they have been asked, they have been left unanswered and research traditions have not evolved. Study of the entire process as an integrated whole within today’s environment and in a way consistent with the cultural sensibilities of modern students would seem to be the unique challenge to popular culture scholarship. The practical justification for popular culture research is that it seems to be a significant feature of modern life, it may have far-reaching social consequences, and therefore its functions and processes need to be understood.
Some advocates of popular culture studies would distinguish them from American studies only in terms of popular culture studies’ tendency to deal with more mundane and more contemporary subject matter. These people would agree with Jack Salzman’s recent statement that the aim of American cultural studies is to “elucidate the essential nature of the American character,”40 with the reservation that popular culture studies should not be limited to American (i.e. U.S.) culture. This is related to the question of the theoretical foundations of popular culture studies. Important as this question may be, it has not been widely discussed—except in the noting of its absence. Only seven of the papers read at the 1975 PCA convention could qualify as theoretical.40 In the Lohof survey, thirteen (4.6 percent) of the articles dealt with “Theory/Method in Popular Culture.”41 In 1976, however, questions of theory and method were the subject of a special section in the *Journal of Popular Culture*, which represents the most thorough and probing investigation of these issues yet produced.42

For information on more specific research topics, we turn again to Lohof’s work. He set up a system of twenty-one categories (e.g., advertising, amusements, art, public affairs, religion), including in his list some categories which are not mutually exclusive (e.g., there is a category for advertising and one for television, but no subcategory for television advertising). It is highly significant that the largest category of research was “Literature: Fiction” (30.2 percent), followed by “Cinema” (10.3 percent), “Music” (9.9 percent), a category identified only as “Thought” (8.2 percent), and “Comics/Cartoons” (5 percent). Each of the other categories accounted for less than 5 percent of the total.43 Furthermore, 52.7 percent of the topics fell into the time period of 1950 to the present, and 81.9 percent dealt with a phenomenon as manifested in the United States.

By using the simple communications model mentioned above (i.e. form, content, diffusion, etc.), we find that scholars tend to deal with only one or two elements in the communications process, i.e. either their dynamic or static dimensions. Elements dealt with usually distinguish those scholars emerging from humanities backgrounds (interested in form and content) from those emerging from social science or behavioral science backgrounds (interested in processes, functions and effects). In terms of the study of form/content elements, two recent works should be cited, because they are important enough to be considered landmarks and will probably have considerable influence on both teaching and research: Wright’s *Sixguns and...*
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Society, which is a structural study of the Western film; and Cawelti's
Adventure, Mystery, and Romance, which is a study of the role of literary
formulae in modern popular fiction. The study of the effects of
reading is finding much interest as a basis for understanding the
formation and reinforcement of sex roles and stereotypes. The ef-
fects of music on the young (with most research using popular song
lyrics) continue to be of interest to some sociologists. Studies of the
effects of advertising are almost a minor industry, but are mostly done
outside of higher education. Television, of course, accounts for the
greatest amount of research in the effects of media exposure.

Insofar as popular culture research has been done as background
for governmental policy decisions, it has been done mostly in the
areas of pornography and televised violence. Lately, increasing in-
terest in the effects of advertising on children has resulted in an effort
to determine what it does to them other than to make them want to
eat more candy and breakfast cereals. Apropos of the interests of the
academic community, should federal, state, and local subsidies for the
arts be confined to the traditional high arts (e.g., avant-garde com-
posers), or should they go also to country and western singers and
composers of rock music? The work of Herbert Gans attempts to
provide a rational answer to this question, while bringing to policy
research a new dimension which is likely to attract much attention.

Cawelti has provided a method of categorizing popular culture
research which is somewhat different from the above. While noting
that the field seems "various and confused," he found that it is
"potentially a single area of study," which presently consists of five
subdivisions: "(1) Studies in the popular arts; (2) Studies of popular
behavior and attitudes; (3) Mass media and their cultural impact;
(4) New trends in contemporary popular culture; (5) Theory of
popular culture." The unanswered question remains to what extent the PCA can
coordinate the various questions emerging from the humanities and
the social and behavioral sciences, with their diverse conceptual
frameworks, into a new and clearly distinct discipline. There is no
doubt, however, that the PCA has structured the framework for a
lively interchange. The structure of the PCA includes forty-nine
"Area Chairpersons," presiding over areas which are defined by
media and subjects. The list of areas begins with "Advertising, Mar-
keting, Image Making and Public Relations" and ends with "Women
in Popular Culture"; between the two, nothing seems to have been

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omitted, and there is a place somewhere for anyone with the remotest interest in popular culture.

METHODOLOGIES

An examination of the material published in the Journal of Popular Culture and the papers read at the 1975 PCA convention indicates clearly the overwhelming dominance of research involving the analysis of documentary (printed, filmed, recorded) evidence. Controlled observation, surveys and experimental research are conspicuous only because of their infrequent occurrence. Of the papers from the 1975 PCA convention, only one paper used techniques of survey research. In the analysis of these sources, we find surprisingly little traditional content analysis using quantification and statistical analysis of variables. In a very real sense, traditional literary analysis and criticism are forms of content analysis, and it has been quite convenient to apply these literary approaches rather than the more rigid (and, in any case, frequently suspect) techniques of strict quantification preferred by sociologists. Denisoff calls content analysis the Achilles heel of popular culture. Of course, the problem of using content analysis (be it strictly quantitative or not) is exacerbated by the difference between the content of the document as analyzed by the researcher and the content of the document as perceived by one or more other human beings within some sort of cultural environment.

Content analysis has frequently been discredited as a source for information to explain human behavior; but, on the other hand, controlled experiments and observation have been slow to produce definitive results in studying the effects of media exposure. Suggesting that these separate approaches provide too narrow a focus, Gerbner is working with techniques which combine the analysis of content with other techniques. He has come as close as anyone to finding some sort of common ground where humanistic and scientific approaches to the study of popular culture message systems can interact. He is interested in measuring the "quality of life" (as evidenced in his "Cultural Indicators"), and the quality of life has always been a central concern of the humanities. Whatever limitations content analysis may have, its potentials continue to attract researchers from numerous disciplines. Morris Janowitz, for example, has recently argued that large-scale systematic analyses of mass media content are essential in order to provide information for policy decisions.
Experimental research and observation have been used most extensively in research directed toward understanding the impact of television on human behavior. This opens up a large body of sources quite different, for the most part, from the PCA sources. This approach, using an awesome array of carefully controlled methodologies, can be seen in the five volumes of technical reports resulting from the research sponsored by the U.S. Surgeon General's Office, *Television and Social Behavior*. The results of the work of almost sixty behavioral scientists were inconclusive and controversial. Content analysis, as the major research technique, constituted only a very small part of this massive project, although in specific behavioral studies, correlations between content and behavior obviously required at least gross analyses of content and systems of categories. The work of George Comstock and his colleagues (which constitutes both a state-of-the-art review of research in television and human behavior and a working agenda for future research) indicates that scientific research even in this rather narrow area is widely scattered through different disciplines. Furthermore, Comstock provides a set of ten categories structuring this research in a way which would serve as a good basis for bibliographic organization not only in television research, but in other areas of popular culture research as well.

**RESOURCES**

It follows from the above that one would expect the major type of research data used in popular culture research to be documentary evidence; this is indeed the case. Whether this is the healthiest state for popular culture studies probably depends on the disciplinary affiliations of whoever is asked for an opinion. It seems obvious, however, that the present situation does not prevent, for instance, the student of the sociology of leisure or of sports from using whatever data are necessary by way of surveys, interviews, participant observations or experiments. There are, however, limits on the extent to which librarians can supply primary research materials. In terms of artifacts, these limits seem to encompass, at least potentially, massive quantities of primary sources in all media.
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To verify these general impressions, the sources identified by authors in preparing their papers for the 1975 PCA convention were examined, with the following results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Sources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Print</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hymn texts</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Song texts</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comic books</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Film</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>Television</td>
<td>7 55</td>
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This brief analysis does not include secondary sources, because such sources are an entirely different problem which cannot be considered until there are a number of citation-analysis studies. The extensive dependence on printed primary sources, although probably reflecting the prominent role of English scholars in the PCA, is nevertheless somewhat surprising.

The need for historical resources can be expected to increase as popular studies become more firmly established. Rollin (who argues against a hierarchical evaluation of popular culture) recently wrote: "The historical study of Popular Culture remains a vast terra incognita, whose charting could occupy us permanently, given the expansion rate of contemporary Popular Culture." If charting this unknown territory is going to occupy scholars to the extent which Rollin suggests, there will be important implications for libraries. To what extent the choice of research topics has been restricted by the unavailability of resources is a question that must haunt librarians interested in popular culture research. There are thus two main concerns: the bibliographical control of popular culture and physical access to it. Before commenting on these two problems, a few words on the artistic and pedagogical aspects of popular culture studies will be useful.

POPULAR CULTURE AS ART

There seem to be two ways to think about popular culture as art: (1) the extent to which some popular culture meets criteria already established and in use by academic scholars of art, literature, and music; (2) the extent to which popular culture (whether it meets academic aesthetic standards or not) performs a function in the lives of its users which is comparable to that of high art in the lives of its users. Whatever is said about either of these approaches will be
controversial and cannot be proven in an objective way. The second is probably the more controversial, and I will comment on it first.

One could argue that there is, in terms of the functions of art, no valid distinction along hierarchical lines, that the terms high art and popular art are essentially meaningless. According to this line of reasoning—in which I firmly believe—the popular country and western singer, Roy Acuff, is only “popular culture” to those observers whose tastes run to a singer such as Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. To the people who derive from the music of Roy Acuff some measure of beauty, some meaningful experience, this singer is neither “popular culture” nor is he “high culture”; he is simply unqualified culture in the most precise meaning of that term. In this context, Fischer-Dieskau does not sing better than Roy Acuff; he just sings differently. To Acuff’s audience, Acuff is the supreme artist, a Nashville Beethoven, whose magnificent, subtle tones and accents touch the spirit in ways available only to the true artist, and in a way which connoisseurs of the art of Fischer-Dieskau will never be able to understand. To Acuff’s audience, life without him would have been somewhat harder to endure and would have had less beauty. Of course, other people in other places can say the same of Fischer-Dieskau—which, I would think, is good reason why the works of both men should be found in libraries and known to scholars who pretend to an interest in the human condition as it is, as well as the way they would like it to be, and to this end study objects of cultural significance. I believe that this line of thought is somewhat different from the line taken by those who have done much to introduce popular culture into the humanities curricula of higher education. Their reasoning, however, will prove more useful in broadening the academic support for popular culture.

The idea that some popular culture, if not most of it, is a form of art obviously depends on how art is defined. In his college study guide, The Sociology and Psychology of Art, Robert Wilson deals with art as traditionally defined by higher education (i.e. “serious” literature, “classical” music, etc.), and thus closes the door on the possibility of examining his topic as it relates to the experiences of most people in the United States, including most of the students to whom his text is addressed. A different understanding of the boundaries of art has brought much popular culture into that mysterious realm. This changing attitude predates Wilson’s work (which was published in 1973) by at least five years (see, for example, Cawelti’s “Beatles, Batman, and the New Aesthetics”). In a more recent work, Cawelti asks if popular culture is coming of age. Although a bit cautious in
answering the question with an unqualified "yes," he is obviously convinced that if it has not all come of age, some of it has come a long, long way. Cawelti examines the background of this change, commenting particularly on the significance of the pop art movement (which successfully challenged New York's "Abstract Impressionism"), the fascinating "Third Stream" art which had its moment in the sun (Gunther Schuller's Third Stream music, jazz masses, jazz operas, and the like), the emergence of some very sophisticated "new wave" science fiction, and changes in filmed and televised drama. Cawelti notes the influence of the "younger humanists," with their acceptance of a plurality of cultural systems, "each with a special autonomy and value of its own."

Central to much of Cawelti's reasoning is the new historical consciousness (a term certainly more useful than "nostalgia," which relates to the users of popular culture rather than to its creators): "This awareness of historical tradition in popular culture seems a significant new phenomenon." Some newer works of popular culture "embody a historical sophistication and awareness that is generally absent from earlier works in these popular traditions." It seems that during the past decade, if not longer, the quality of popular culture has improved. It is more sophisticated, complex, and subtle. It has attained a high level of aesthetic and intellectual content. Certainly this is not true of all popular culture, but is true of enough of it that a new aesthetics can be defined. The audience for this art has rejected traditional classics as well as the overly simplistic structures of an earlier popular culture. The most obvious result of this reevaluation of popular culture is the extent to which popular culture is now being taught in colleges and universities. Generally speaking, departments of music (except for their token courses in jazz and folk music) and departments of art (except for the extent to which young artists create works of art, which to the layperson are hardly distinguishable from junkyard contents) seem to have held out longest against this wave of what Ray B. Browne has called "the new humanities." The impact of the new humanities is most strikingly evident in departments of English, and—although not yet nearly so pervasively—in departments of anthropology and sociology.

TEACHING POPULAR CULTURE

The following two course descriptions, taken from the catalog of courses offered at Boston University during the summer of 1976 are
relatively typical of hundreds of courses now being offered in American colleges and universities:

CLA AN [Anthropology] 369. Pop Culture: The Great American Way of Life. How are sports, television, movies, literature and the comic book, Madison Avenue, and the world of high fashion expressions of the Great American Way of life? Or, how is the great American way of life the expression of all of these things? Are the above mentioned things related to the complex culture and society of the U.S. at all? Participants in the course attempt to deal with these questions through an anthropological perspective. Readings, lectures, and field observation are the modes used in exploring both the media and the messages. Assistant Professor Aquilera. 9:30-11:00 A.M. 4 credits.

CLA AN [Anthropology] 370. Science Fiction and Fantasy: An Anthropological Perspective. Constructions of imaginary worlds frequently reveal very much about the world in which the author lives and works. Works of science fiction and fantasy utilized as reflections of the socio-cultural systems from which they emerge. Works used from as many different cultures and time periods as possible. Mr. Aquino. 11:00 A.M.-12:30 P.M. 4 credits.

Aquilera and Aquino were not the only instructors to turn to popular culture resources at Boston University's summer school last year. Throughout the university's catalog there is evidence of interest from disciplines other than anthropology, including literature, women's studies, film studies, sociology (which also offered a course in science fiction), and public communications. Boston University is not atypical in its burgeoning interest in courses in popular culture, but it is difficult to determine how many such courses are being offered in the United States. Nevertheless, when Yale University begins such a program it is safe to assume that this is something that is more than a passing fancy. Last spring, in his undergraduate course English 76-2A, Yale professor David Thorburn “launched into a discussion of the moral problems posed by the macho TV series ‘Kojak’” before moving on to comment on “The Honeymooners” and Archie Bunker’s “All in the Family.” Thorburn, who is obviously one of the new humanists, told his class of 250 young scholars that television may be our most serious form of dramatic art and should be taken seriously. Ray B. Browne, who probably knows more about this movement than anyone, estimated in 1975 that “the number of
courses in popular culture—under such names as film, sports, popular fiction, TV-radio, et cetera—has grown to at least 1000, in several hundred colleges and universities." This seems to be a very cautious estimate. In the American Film Institute's Guide to College Courses in Film and Television, we find these numbing statistics: at 791 schools, there are 8,225 film and television courses, taught by 2,622 faculty members to 30,869 students pursuing degrees in film or television.

Jack Williamson located the beginnings of the science fiction invasion of academia at Colgate University in 1962, and in his own survey of the situation listed more than 250 courses in American colleges, but noted that another authority, James Gunn, "estimates an actual total [of science fiction and fantasy courses] nearer one thousand." Other evidence of a pedagogical interest in the potentials of popular culture is its frequent incorporation into American studies programs. The Modern Language Association, which for more than a decade has had a subsection on science fiction, has recently decided that its "Comparative Literature II" subsection shall henceforth be devoted to popular literature. The College English Association is also interested in popular literature, as evidenced by its recent publication Science Fiction: The Academic Awakening. All of this is proceeding rather quietly, all things considered. It is, after all, a revolution of sorts.

If there is going to be some kind of serious academic schism, I would look for it among our musicologists. When someone with the academic credentials and creative acumen of Wilfrid Mellers writes a serious book about the Beatles, one has no recourse but to take it seriously. When Yvette Bader reviewed this study for Notes, the journal of the Music Library Association (which, in some ways, may be considered an arm of the culturally elitist American Musicological Society), she wrote:

"We can look forward to a whole rash of similar erudite studies (including doctoral dissertations) on far less talented musicians than the Beatles. Whether by opening up Pandora's box Mellers has contributed to human knowledge, or whether he has simply given respectability to a type of sound which academic theoreticians have scorned for years, is impossible to predict."

Passing over the astonishing assumptions found in these few sentences, one must regretfully suggest that Bader is probably overly optimistic about both the ability and the inclination of the current generation of American musicologists to contribute to the study of
current popular music. Anyone who doubts this should examine Richard Crawford's essay, American Studies and American Musicology. In order to find a place in higher education for the study of American music, Crawford has invented something called "American musicology." This musicology is different from the more or less standard musicology taught in the United States (which is an extension of the discipline as it was developed in Europe). I personally do not find this American musicology promising, except to the extent that it may coincide with Bonnie Wade's definition of ethnomusicology, which she sees as "the study of music, culture, and society all in one package which requires the combined study of music, anthropology, sociology, folklore, linguistics, or any other discipline that becomes pertinent to whatever music is under consideration."

THE NEXT GENERATION

Bubbling up under all of this is a new generation of high school students, the bulk of whom are drenched in popular culture during their out-of-school hours. Nor could the high school itself resist the invasion of popular culture studies. The introduction of such studies into the high school curriculum may, in the long run, have the greatest impact on the shape of undergraduate studies and graduate research in years to come. This movement requires a separate survey, and I will comment here on only several recent developments. In March 1976 the bulk of one issue of the English Journal was devoted to sources and uses of popular culture in secondary schools. In the previous year, Social Education had a section on "Social Studies and Popular Music," which included B. Lee Cooper's piece on images of the future as pictured in popular music. In his review of recordings of the pivotal rock 'n' roll artist, Chuck Berry, Cooper wrote: "For the social historian, the literary analyst, or the cultural sociologist, these three Chuck Berry albums are potential gold mines for study." His review was published in the History Teacher, and Cooper made a very persuasive case for the use of Chuck Berry's music in high school and college classrooms.

High school teachers now have access to curriculum modules produced by Prime Time School TV. Topics critically and analytically related to current television programming include: constitutional law (i.e. law as it is practiced in real life as compared to how it is practiced in television drama), television commercials, human relations, value education (using "All in the Family" and other series), and economics and world affairs.
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The high school periodical *Senior Scholastic* regularly reports on popular culture personalities and events. High school poetry courses include the study of texts from current popular songs; a splendid example is Hogan's *Poetry of Relevance*, which includes many texts by artists such as Paul Simon, Mick Jagger and Joni Mitchell. Recordings of old radio programs are widely used in courses in history, social studies and literature, and teachers exchange ideas in the periodical *Media and Methods*. Science fiction is also used in an array of high school courses, and publishers have responded with numerous anthologies aimed at the high school market.

Much of this development in the secondary schools is an attempt to respond to the fact that the entertainment industry is one of the most powerful educational forces in our society. Rather than leaving this informal education entirely in the hands of media programmers, some high school teachers are trying to develop critical and analytical skills to help students deal rationally with some of the forces which are shaping their lives.

It would probably be a good idea to assume that popular culture studies, in one form or another, are going to be with us for a long time. New types of students and instructors will come into our colleges and universities; they will need new resources, and they will open up new areas of research. What we have seen so far could be just the beginning of a massive change in higher education and academic scholarship. A few years ago, John Cawelti wrote: "It is too early to tell whether popular culture studies will develop as an independent discipline or will eventually be enfolded back into anthropology, cultural history, American studies and social psychology." It may still be too soon to tell the future of popular culture's place in higher education. That it will continue to have a place, however, seems assured. In the meantime, whatever happens and whatever strange places our wayward scholars go, the maps to the territories will be systems of bibliographic control.

The earliest systematic excursions into many areas of popular culture were made by nonacademic scholars and by private collectors. Whether we are talking about bibliographic control, research, or physical access to primary sources, these people must be taken into account. It is obvious that in many areas of popular culture (e.g., recorded popular music, radio broadcasting, comic books), the bulk of what has been preserved remains in private hands.
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THE ROLE OF THE PRIVATE COLLECTOR

It is possible that in the near future private collectors will look to academic libraries as the ultimate repositories for their collections—assuming that academic librarians want them. Clearly, the most important contribution of the private collectors has been the preservation of materials which would otherwise have been lost, but their contributions go far beyond this. The passion for collecting is, as often as not, accompanied by a considerable knowledge of the form, structure and history of specific communications media. Collectors also need to communicate with kindred spirits. Thus, there are few areas of popular culture which do not have associations and systems of communication. These run the gamut from loosely structured fan clubs, which are quite unsophisticated and are of negligible scholarly value, to more formal organizations which have made substantial scholarly contributions (e.g., the John Edwards Memorial Foundation).

These collectors' organizations are of interest for their substantive contributions to preservation and bibliographic control, and because they are cultural phenomena which are worthy of documentation and sociological study in and of themselves. There is a sharp distinction between associations which represent the interests of private collectors and those which represent the interests of academic scholars and librarians. The Association for Recorded Sound Collections seems to be one of the few associations which have deliberately tried to resolve the interests of both groups. It cannot be said that this organization has been spectacularly successful, but it has survived for a decade and continues to provide a forum for discussion of discographic problems of common interest to academic and nonacademic scholars and collectors.

Members of the academic community are not always accepted into the nonprofessional organizations without some resentment. In some cases, this lack of rapport is a byproduct of cultural differences which separate the lower and middle socioeconomic classes from the highly educated elite. It is exacerbated by the language of scholarship, which nonacademic scholars believe is unnecessarily prolix, pedantic and dull, and by the collectors' suspicions—which are not always without foundation—that the scholars' interests are not motivated by a genuine respect for the sources. Librarians must in some way establish contacts with the private collectors if some of the massive private collections are eventually to go to libraries. It is not at all clear how this
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is to be done, but a beginning has been made by those librarians who
have taken popular culture seriously enough not only to collect it, but
also to catalog it and make it accessible to library users.

FANZINES

A fascinating and little explored area of popular culture is the large
group of noncommercial periodical publications identified as fan-
zines. The only serious study of the fanzine phenomenon was pro-
duced by Frederic Wertham, the behavioral psychologist whose works
include the controversial and highly influential study of violence in
comic books, Seduction of the Innocent. To the scholar, fanzines are
not only sources of information about popular culture's form, struc-
ture and bibliographic control, but are also cultural phenomena
worthy of study as systems of communication. They are produced for
relatively small audiences, and are the exact opposite of the mass
circulation popular culture magazines. Wertham says that they are
"sincere and spontaneous," "essentially unpolluted by the greed, the
arrogance, and the hypocrisy that has invaded so much of our
intellectual life," and, most importantly, they are media of communi-
cation which flourish "without any outside interference, without any
control from above, without any censorship, without any supervision
or manipulation." The tendency has been to identify fanzines as the
noncommercial periodicals and newsletters associated with science
fiction and comic books, but the same phenomenon exists in virtually
all areas of popular culture. For example, various forms of popular
music account for hundreds of fanzines. No scholar or librarian
seriously interested in jazz, rock 'n' roll, or country and western music
could begin to deal with the discographic control of these areas of
study without access to some of the fanzines. Some of them are quite
specialized. In his article "Collecting Rock Oldies—Records that Go
Jingle," Ditlea comments on six rock music collectors' sources, and
notes that some are limited to the subgenres of "British rock" and
"white rock of the 1960s and 1970s."

Wertham has identified more than 200 fanzines dealing with
science fiction. The number of fanzines in all areas of popular culture
probably totals several thousand titles. For all practical purposes,
bibliographic control of fanzines does not exist. Few libraries collect
them, and they seldom turn up in sources for the bibliographic
control of periodicals. If as few as six academic libraries were to
attempt to deal with fanzines on a cooperative basis, it would be
possible to collect systematically a good portion of these sources and to structure some sort of clearinghouse for information about them.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC CONTROL

TYPES OF SOURCES

The obvious distinction between primary and secondary sources can be used to categorize two types of material and two essentially different types of bibliographic problems. The primary sources are books, films, television shows, and whatever artifacts are used to record and transfer popular culture information. Another group of primary sources is documents concerning the creators of popular culture, including materials as diverse as letters, diaries, annual reports of manufacturers, and advertisements—in short, the whole range of sources usually associated with historical and literary research. Secondary sources include the articles, studies, research reports, etc., which analyze, criticize, or comment on popular culture in any of its aspects. This distinction raises a few minor problems. A periodical or book about popular culture which has been produced for laypersons interested in popular culture may be used as either a primary or a secondary source. For example, the periodical Rolling Stone may provide the researcher with factual information on some aspect of popular culture, but this periodical itself is part of the system of popular culture communications. It interacts with the producers and consumers of popular culture, and while providing news, gossip or opinion, it also changes popular culture. The fanzines belong to this category of sources.

SECONDARY SOURCES

The various sources of popular culture research emerging from humanistic and scientific disciplines create serious problems of bibliographic control for the scholar of popular culture. Because materials are scattered everywhere, it is nearly impossible to gain a comprehensive view of what is happening. An example of this dispersion, although admittedly on a very small scale, may be seen in the bibliography prepared by Larry Landrum to support his discussion of methodology in popular culture research. He selected “reasonably current articles which are representative of a wide range of disci-
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plines, journals, research interests, methodologies, and styles of presentation. He produced a bibliography of 100 items published in 68 different journals. The incongruities are striking; included are Rural Sociology and Yale Review, Annals of the Association of American Geographers and British Journal of Aesthetics, Journal of Applied Social Psychology and Industrial Archeology. All of these sources are adequately dealt with in indexing and abstracting services—adequate, that is, for a rural sociologist, a geographer, or whatever. No service, except the recently-published Abstracts of Popular Culture, has attempted to deal with these and other sources selectively for the specific purpose of serving the potential interests of the popular culture scholar.

We are completely lacking in any studies of the channels of communication among popular culture scholars. The consequences of the bibliographic situation may be presumed to be serious, in any case. Even a brief examination of the studies of television published in the Journal of Popular Culture and other largely humanistically oriented sources suggests that the vast literature of the sort examined by Comstock is very seldom referred to by writers for the Journal, and that references to works which are published in the Journal are, in turn, lacking. The assumption that scholars and students examining the same phenomenon find that the work of their colleagues in other disciplines is irrelevant to their own work is neither defensible nor logical.

Unusual problems of access to secondary sources are found in any interdisciplinary field, but seem to be particularly complex in the case of popular culture. Of course, there are many guides to sources potentially relevant to the study of popular culture—too many to attempt a survey of them here. They include hundreds of somewhat general subject indexes to specific publications or groups of publications (e.g., Readers' Guide, New York Times Index, Current Contents: Social & Behavioral Sciences), and there are many kinds of specialized subject indexes and abstracts in the humanities and social sciences. In specific areas of popular culture, there are even more bibliographic sources. An entire issue of Library Trends would be needed to review only the most important sources. At the present time, the best general bibliographic help that a library can provide is a resourceful reference librarian with a broad grasp of the field. For current materials, however, we now have a new reference source which will make the librarian's work less complicated.
The initial publication of *Abstracts of Popular Culture* in the fall of 1976 was an indication of the increasing maturity of popular culture studies. The first quarterly issue, with more than 2,000 abstracts, selectively covers the contents of 188 periodicals. The editor plans the broadest possible coverage of both popular and scholarly sources, and to this end the abstractors scan 600 periodicals for relevant material. Abstracts are arranged alphabetically by names of authors, with the main subject access provided by an alphabetical subject index. A valuable feature is the inclusion of abstracts of unpublished studies, including papers read at the annual meetings of the PCA (and, in future issues, probably papers from many of the PCA regional meetings). Copies of these studies may be obtained from or located through the offices of the *Abstracts*. As this tool develops, it is likely that patterns will begin to emerge and that it will be possible to construct a classification system which will help us to conceptualize the structure of the field with its complicated approaches and interrelationships.

**PRIMARY SOURCES**

The bibliographic control of primary sources involves a massive number of tools, largely structured to deal with specific media. A single general guide, even if it were selective, is hardly conceivable and would probably be of doubtful value. As always, we have both problems of current and retrospective controls. Some areas of popular culture already have reasonably satisfactory controls. Consider, for example, the large number of bibliographic guides to commercial films, which will soon be supplemented by the American Film Institute’s *Catalog of Motion Pictures*, a work which will completely document the history of film in the United States from its beginnings in the 1890s. Popular music, both printed and recorded, has been the object of intensive bibliographic and discographic work. Several projects are now underway to provide comprehensive bibliographies of discographies. Comic books and science fiction have also found dedicated bibliographers, the latter genre now having an astonishing bibliographic apparatus.

Many of the best works dealing with primary sources are produced either by the commercial manufacturers and distributors of popular culture, or by collectors and nonacademic students. The recent work...
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by Sandberg and Weissman is an excellent example of the latter type. Its title, *The Folk Music Sourcebook*, is more limited than its contents, for the authors cover printed, recorded, and filmed primary and secondary sources for such genres as the following—all of which I would consider popular culture (although they could just as well be identified as popular subculture): black gospel music, white sacred country music, all categories of blues, jug bands, country instrumental music, classical country and western music, country swing, Chicano music, and Cajun music.

What librarians now need is a general classified survey and guide to these sources, a bibliography of bibliographies of popular culture. Furthermore, the tools with which we educate young librarians (e.g., such texts as those by Asheim, Rogers, and Broadus) do not take into account the current academic interest in popular culture. My assumption has been that libraries are primarily interested in commercially produced primary sources. On the other hand, libraries—in this case, principally public libraries—are in an excellent position to create primary sources by including the documentation of local popular culture in their local history programs, including oral history projects. Major urban areas (e.g., Detroit, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, New York, Nashville) and many cities, large and small, offer tremendous possibilities for documenting both mainstream popular culture activities and the popular cultures of local ethnic neighborhoods.

PHYSICAL ACCESS

The central problem facing popular culture scholarship in general is access to current and retrospective primary sources. Thus, this is the most serious problem with which librarians must deal. The rise of popular culture studies has occurred during a decade when the economic resources of academic libraries have been severely restricted. This restriction has led to even greater emphasis by libraries on networks, resource sharing, cooperative acquisitions programs, and other developments which will clearly benefit the planning of a systematic approach to the provision of access to popular culture resources. The knowledge and resources to deal with more or less conventional print media are already available; but the provision of access to sound recordings and tapes of television broadcasts is a major problem. Librarians have had little experience in the legal aspects of copying such resources and have not traditionally supplied them on interlibrary loan.
Academic libraries already hold many special collections of popular culture, but most of these are historical materials. Among the twentieth-century genres, science fiction has probably been the one best served by academic libraries (the increasing respectability of science fiction was evident in 1976 when the house of Sotheby's had its first science fiction book sale). The bulk of these resources can probably be located through a search of numerous library resource guides. However, the field is unique enough to suggest that the preparation of a separate guide to popular culture resources in the libraries of the United States and Canada would be a worthy undertaking. In fact, such a directory is needed before any extensive cooperative plans can be made for systematic acquisitions. Members of the PCA have been urged to send reports of special collections to the Center for the Study of Popular Culture, and it is not unlikely that a directory will one day emerge from these efforts.

The Library and Audio Center of the Center for the Study of Popular Culture seems to be the only special library completely dedicated to the collection of all types of popular culture resources. It is a multimedia collection without any limitations: "No item is too ephemeral for our consideration. In fact, the more insignificant an item may appear, the more value it may have for . . . [the] collections." Academic librarians have not been unaware of the need to preserve some popular culture, as is evident in the holdings of the Center for Research Libraries (CRL). For example, CRL has a program to acquire comic books and popular periodicals selectively. CRL's policies, however, seem too restrictive to make much of a dent in the masses of current material. Note that among the current periodical acquisitions, the CRL's Handbook lists *Hit Parade*. Randomly selected issues of this basic source are no doubt useful; but a systematic collection of popular culture would have to include not only a complete run of *Hit Parade* but the seven other music periodicals issued by its publisher, Charleton Press, as well.

Several recent events indicate the growing trend to organize special collections of nonbook materials and to provide access to them. The Museum of Broadcasting opened in New York in 1976. Apparently this is the first such institution—or at least the first on such a large scale—to be completely devoted to documenting the history of radio and television broadcasting. Beginning with a modest collection of 718 broadcasts, the museum anticipates that by 1980 it will have acquired 18,000 broadcasts on audio- and videotape. During the
same year that the museum opened, two guides to audio broadcasts were published: (1) Pitts' *Radio Soundtracks*,\(^{88}\) with listings of broadcasts available on tape and LP discs; and (2) Bensman's *Sources of Broadcast Audio Programming*,\(^{99}\) which includes a catalog of more than one hundred collections. Also in 1976, the Bowker company issued Weber's *North American Film and Video Directory*,\(^{100}\) which contains information on almost 2,000 institutional collections.

Considering the great interest in the use of audio and video broadcast materials, it is surprising that after the PCA published the first number of *Popular Culture Airwaves Bulletin* in 1974,\(^{101}\) it was discontinued because there were not enough subscriptions to support the project. The chief purpose of the bulletin was to serve researchers by locating primary sources and by providing information of new publications, research and teaching programs. One would have thought that subscriptions from academic libraries alone would have made the project feasible. In the one issue published, Tedesco briefly outlined a proposal for a Message Systems Data Archive, a challenge that made not even a slight ripple in professional library organizations.\(^{102}\)

A number of reprint houses have responded to higher education's interest in popular culture. Without attempting a thorough survey of these projects, a few examples may be worth mentioning. Xerox University Microfilms has announced a microfilm series to include such periodicals as *The Shadow* and *Success*. The Arno Press has a 27-volume historical reprint series of books originally published between 1800 and 1925. Several houses have science fiction reprint series, and the Garland Publishing company has a series of fifty classics of crime fiction. There are, of course, many other reprints, some of which are less ambitious but are equally important. Comic books and funnies have been extensively reprinted, and reissues of various forms of popular music on LP recordings are being produced in large quantities for the commercial market. An overall survey has not yet been made of needed resources by the PCA, or any library organization, in order to find out more precisely what is most needed in the way of reprints. On the other hand, some of the reprint houses seem to be getting good advice from their advisors and editors. But it is possible that some academic libraries, if better informed about the needs of popular culture research by some formal action of a professional organization, might find that their money would be better invested in current popular culture resources. This, of course, is the
potential danger of individual libraries dealing on an ad hoc basis with their own immediate academic needs without a larger framework of services to popular culture research as a whole.

At this point it would be commendable to outline an agenda for action, but this is clearly a task best accomplished within some framework involving formal representation from the PCA and several professional library organizations. Somewhere within the structure of the American Library Association there must be a place for a new committee or study group to consider all of the problems created by this new and exciting area of research.

I am firmly convinced that popular culture studies will continue on their present course, although at an accelerated rate. Many diverse disciplines will take increasing notice of popular culture, and at the same time its study will continue to develop as a separate discipline. In any case, attempts to understand popular culture and to study it in some systematic fashion will remain an important challenge to scholarship as long as popular culture continues to play such an important role in shaping our society. We cannot escape it, and its study has really only just begun. Everything we have seen of the mass media’s diffusion of popular culture message systems during the past century indicates that its influence will not diminish in a country such as ours, where public media remain free of governmental restraints.

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