

Introduction

JEROME K. MILLER

THE INVENTIONS OF Thomas Edison, George Eastman, Joseph Tykociner, and others made the modern, color, sound film a reality. A wise decision by business competitors provided the standardized 16mm format used today. These developments in film technology are important, but they are not the true cause of the growth of film services in libraries. To find the real reason, changing attitudes must be examined. Perhaps the first stimulus came from educational philosophers such as Comenius, Pestalozzi and Montessori, who stressed the importance of permitting students to employ all of their senses in their studies. This concept of the whole learner was further advanced by recent reformers such as Dewey and Dale.

Although educational film libraries existed sixty years ago, few teachers then used films in their classes. The expense and complexity of the early projectors and the danger of fire from the nitrate films justified some reluctance to use films in schools. One early educational film catalog advised teachers, in case the projector caught on fire, to throw it out the window. The thought of throwing a blazing, 50-pound projector through a school window was not designed to encourage film use. The advent of improved (and lighter) machines and "safety" film stock must have been reassuring.

Again, however, it was not the advent of new technologies that fostered film use. It was, instead, due almost entirely to changing attitudes about the film. At the beginning of World War II, a number of filmmakers persuaded President Roosevelt that the rapid training of thousands of soldiers, sailors, and airmen could only be achieved through the inten-

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sive use of audiovisual materials. Throughout the war, the U.S. Office of Education and the training aids divisions of the army and navy produced thousands of 16mm training films. Millions of Americans began to realize that films were useful for education as well as entertainment. The war effort also produced a cadre of capable young officers (James W. Brown, James D. Finn, Robert E. deKieffer, and many others) who began to use skills acquired in the military training aids divisions to introduce audiovisual education to the postwar schools. The generous flow of federal funds to schools in the 1950s and 1960s helped to support their ambitious goals. As a result, there are few teachers who do not use films in their teaching today.

The increase in the use of films in the public schools soon spread to colleges and universities. The burgeoning community colleges were generally among the first to seize on the importance of educational films in the classroom. The major research-oriented universities were often the last to accept this innovation in teaching. Several reasons can be advanced to explain this phenomenon, but the writer believes it is due in large part to the unwillingness of university libraries to accept the film and other audiovisual materials as legitimate library materials.

As a result of this reluctance, separate university audiovisual libraries grew up on the campuses. They were often underfunded and relegated to odd corners of the campus. A few university library administrators included audiovisual materials in the library collection and provided adequate staffing to maintain the services. On those campuses, films are now widely used in teaching and independent study.

Film services in many public libraries has had a long and honorable history. Public librarians regard films as legitimate works of art, history or literature, worthy of inclusion in the collection along with books, periodicals, and records. In too many libraries, however, films are regarded as supplemental materials to be used as "book bait," i.e., to entice children, the uneducated or the elderly to read. Although the term *book bait* has disappeared from library jargon, the underlying attitude that films are second-class library materials is still evident in some public libraries. This unfortunate attitude is now giving way to the more enlightened one that the film, as a unique form of literary or artistic expression, is worthy of representation in library collections. A wave of media-minded librarians is finding new ways to include films in library collections and services. Under their capable leadership, the future of film services in public libraries seems promising.

Some of the leaders in this movement were invited to submit articles

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on the role of films in libraries to this issue of *Library Trends*. The issue attempts to explore a range of topics, including new film-making techniques (avant-garde), new physical formats (8mm and video), and new management techniques (data bases for bibliographic control and consumerism). Additional articles treat the role of film services to special groups, such as children, the elderly, and the hearing-impaired. The editors regret that it was impossible to obtain contributions describing certain new topics within the field.

Ronald Sigler describes the development of film services in public libraries. In so doing, he traces the historic precedents as well as the developing philosophy of film services. His account of the early years is particularly interesting for its contrast between actual practices and the developing philosophy. Orrin G. Cocks advocated using films for instruction and enlightenment. The pioneer film libraries used films as publicity materials to gain new readers. The idea that films are legitimate literary or artistic works was slow to be accepted; yet the progress in recent years is encouraging.

Euclid Peltier introduces library film services through his apt definitions of three types of films: the teaching or classroom film, the information or idea film and the entertainment or recreation film. The number of films in each category has grown substantially in recent years. The number and diversity of films falling in the last category are particularly amazing. Animated, unnarrated, iconographic, underground, and avant-garde films are only a few of the types found in this category. Libraries have been quick to accept films representing some of these formats; the revolutionary philosophies and techniques used in the underground or avant-garde films, however, have not been as well received in many libraries. William Sloan discusses the role of these films in library collections and suggests a number of notable avant-garde films suitable for library collections.

Three articles discuss the role of films in three important areas of library services. Julie Cummins provides a thoughtful analysis of the problems librarians face in selecting films for children. The title of her article is itself a description of the problem: "Children's Films: Secondhand, Second-rate, or Second Wind?" Jean Haynes traces the development of film services to the elderly. The emphasis on travel and nature films in programs for the elderly suggests that library film programming for this group has yet to fulfill its potential, or the potentials of this age group. Salvatore Parlato explores the wealth of captioned and unnarrated films available to the hearing-impaired. His comments on the use of unnarrated

films for both hearing and hearing-impaired audiences are particularly valuable.

A list of 500 recommended films supplied by the Film Library Information Council helps to round out this portion of the issue. The list includes many older titles that are now regarded as classics. Many fine new films are also included.

The topic of management of library film services offers a number of special challenges. When the super-8mm film format was introduced in the mid-1950s, librarians and film-makers were delighted with the possibilities it offered. The optimism expressed by the film-makers was well founded. The super-8mm format was well suited to the needs of the amateur and the professional film-maker. Unfortunately, many of the potential benefits to libraries have not been realized. The problem rests, in part, on the lack of standardized sound system and cartridge formats. Kodak concentrates its film and equipment production on the magnetic sound track and reel-to-reel cartridge formats; technicolor only offers equipment employing the optical sound system and an endless-loop cartridge. The availability of these two incompatible formats discourages the mass production of films for library use. Philip Levering's article describes the common applications of these two formats in public and school libraries. His article includes a list of the major vendors of super-8mm films.

Ruth Rains provides a fascinating account of the development of bibliographical control for films. The film locator project which she describes holds great potential for library film services. The published result of this project will mark a milestone in the development of union lists of 16mm films. It is fortunate that the project is based on university library film rental collections, since these libraries have lower rental rates than most commercial film libraries. The *Locator* will be more than a union list, however. It will provide a unique subject bibliography employing an authority system designed for films. (The value of this contribution can best be appreciated by those who have used the Sears or Library of Congress subject headings to catalog avant-garde films.) When the locator data base is fully developed, libraries will be able to use it to publish their own film catalogs. The library will inform the R.R. Bowker Co. of the titles in its collection; the data base can then be manipulated to provide a catalog to match the library's collection. If the library has titles which are not in the data base, the cataloging information for those titles will be added to the data base. The potential for improved services and reduced costs from this project is difficult to calculate.

Jan Cureton's article gives an interesting account of the efforts of the

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Consortium of University Film Centers to develop consumer standards for film buyers. Its efforts to obtain color-stable film stock will help libraries provide more attractive film programs. It will also reduce the necessity of weeding films because of color shifts in the film stock. The work of this association has generally gone unnoticed outside its small membership. It is fortunate that this information could be shared with the readers of *Library Trends*.

The final article describes the development of licensing agreements that permit libraries to videotape films. For a modest cost, libraries can make unlimited numbers of copies of popular titles to accommodate heavy demand periods. When the demand for a title diminishes, the tape can be erased and used to copy another popular title. This is especially useful for meeting peak seasonal demands and for eliminating canceled reservations resulting from overdue films.

Thanks must be given here to Patricia Mackey for her efforts to organize the content of this issue and for selecting most of the articles. A special note of appreciation is due to Linda Hoffman for her efforts to organize and edit the issue in time to meet printing deadlines.

This issue marks the introduction of a new cover design. The *Library Trends* Publications Committee hopes that it will add to the attractiveness of the journal.

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