

# Audio—Visual Aids and the College Library

*By means of a "quick survey" Dr. Johnson has brought together facts concerning the relation of college libraries to the instructional use of motion pictures and recordings.*

CONCURRENTLY with the expanded use of motion pictures and recordings in education, the suggestion has repeatedly been made that audio-visual aids may well contribute important stock-in-trade for librarians. In 1934 the American Library Association recognized the relationship of visual aids to libraries by establishing its Visual Methods Committee, a committee which later changed its name to the Audio-Visual Committee. In 1942 the Association published Gerald D. McDonald's *Educational Motion Pictures and Libraries*. In 1943 the National Society for the Study of Education Committee, responsible for the yearbook *The Library in General Education*, gave prominent recognition to the importance of audio-visual aids as a part of library service.<sup>1</sup>

Although the idea of collecting, housing, and distributing audio-visual aids as a part of library service has often been discussed, the current practice of college libraries with respect to such service is not accurately known. Answers to such ques-

tions as the following, for example, are not available in published sources:

How extensively are audio-visual aids actually used in college teaching?

What is the place of the college library in the administration and distribution of audio-visual aids to teaching?

What in the judgment of college librarians and administrators should be the place of the college library in the audio-visual education program?

The writer, therefore, believing that such information might throw significant light on trends in library practice and on developments in library service, has undertaken to collect information directly from colleges. An appropriate means of doing this is the "quick survey" method which Dr. Charters, as editor, first used in the *Journal of Higher Education* in 1940.<sup>2</sup>

As the first step in the survey the writer prepared a simple two-page checklist. In keeping with his desire to make the inquiry brief, only two types of audio-visual aids were included: motion pictures and recordings. This survey blank was sent to the presidents of all colleges which are members of the Association of American Colleges and to the administrative heads of all junior colleges with enrolments of more than two hundred. Three hundred ninety-eight usable replies were received, 324 from four-year colleges and univer-

<sup>1</sup>Kirk, Marguerite, Glannon, Helen Eagle, Schofield, Edward Twining, and Freund, Roberta Bishop. "Other Aids to Learning." In National Society for the Study of Education, Forty-Second Yearbook, Part II, *The Library in General Education*. Chapter 11, p. 176-218. Department of Education, University of Chicago, 1943.

<sup>2</sup>Charters, W. W. "Sizing Up the Faculty." *Journal of Higher Education* 11:457-61, December 1940. The "quick survey" method has since been used on several different occasions in the *Journal of Higher Education*.

sities and 74 from junior colleges.

### *Motion Pictures*

Practically all colleges offer their teachers an opportunity to use motion pictures in their instruction; more than nine tenths of the colleges provide facilities for showing motion pictures to classes. There is no significant difference (on the basis of percentage) between the practices of junior colleges and of four-year colleges in this respect. Of the thirty-two colleges which have no visual education service, five are junior colleges (6 per cent of the junior colleges replying) and twenty-seven are four-year colleges (8.5 per cent of the four-year colleges replying). Not only are motion picture facilities provided, they are also used. Seven colleges report all teachers use motion pictures, and in only seventeen colleges do no teachers use motion pictures. Half of the colleges report that from 10 to 25 per cent of their teachers use motion pictures in their teaching.

The administration of a visual education program involves not so much the housing and storage of a collection of films (though in some colleges this is important) as the provision for borrowing films and the provision of aids for selecting them. Only 3 per cent of the colleges own all films for their professional use in teaching.

Particularly important in the visual education program are the aids provided to teachers to help select films which may be borrowed from distributors. More than three fourths of the colleges provide teachers with catalogs of motion picture distributors. Thirty colleges keep a central, single, up-to-date catalog of films. The University of Minnesota and Stephens College report recording evaluative data (for example, the judgment of

faculty members who have used or seen the film) on catalog cards and preparing annotated bibliographies of films at the request of teachers. At Stephens students of several instructors use the central visual education catalog (along with the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*, the library catalog of books, etc.) as an aid to securing materials for investigative papers. This means that, having identified a motion picture which relates to a report a student is preparing, she may, with her instructor's approval, order the film for use in preparing or presenting her report.

Several colleges mention keeping the H. W. Wilson *Educational Film Catalog* as an aid to teachers in selecting films. The practice of providing free preview service for any film a teacher may wish to consider for use is reported by several colleges. Monmouth Junior College, Long Branch, N.J., suggests the need for help in selecting films: "The commercial listing of thousands of films presents a bewildering problem to the director of visual education. We need a noncommercial central agency to give the 'low-down' about films without fear of the commercial toes that are stepped on."

### *Centralization of Facilities*

Another important group of questions regarding the handling of motion picture films relates to the problem of centralized administration: Is responsibility for getting motion pictures and projection equipment left with individual teachers and departments? Or is motion picture service centralized in some one agency? If centralized, what is the agency?

Although there is considerable variation among colleges with respect to the centralization of motion picture facilities, the majority of colleges report some type of cen-

tralization plan. Two hundred and two colleges have a centralizing agency for motion picture service and 144 institutions (52 colleges did not reply to this question) have no such agency. In these latter institutions responsibility for procuring films rests with individual departments or with the individual instructor. Representative of the comments made by colleges where responsibility rests with individual departments is the statement from Brooklyn College: "The trend of opinion among the departments is strongly toward allowing each department to provide and administer its own audio and visual education materials. The feeling is that it requires a specialist in each field to keep informed on latest developments." Among the agencies which centralize and coordinate motion picture service on the campus are a visual education department, the extension service, a faculty committee, a voluntary group of interested teachers, and the library.

Representative of universities having highly developed visual education departments is the University of Minnesota. With a staff of twelve full-time and twenty-five part-time employees, the department provides six thousand showings annually. The director of Visual Education Service of the University of Minnesota makes the following comments on centralization:

In the thirteen years since the Visual Education Service of the University of Minnesota was established the centralization of materials, equipment, facilities, and *consultive* service for all audio-visual aids has proved to be very efficient and educationally valuable. At a university the director of visual education should have the requisite knowledge, personality, and opportunity to teach faculty members how to use films effectively in teaching.

At Indiana University and at the University of Iowa state-wide as well as campus visual education service is offered by the extension division. The Bureau of Visual Aids at Indiana University forecasts extensive expansion in the use of films in teaching. As a part of the work of a postwar planning committee the visual aids staff at Indiana is preparing an expanded visual education program.

At Sarah Lawrence College a faculty committee coordinates visual education service.

#### *Library as Visual Aids Center*

In few colleges (29 of the 398 cooperating colleges) is the library the centralizing agency for motion picture service. Representative of the colleges with a library-centered visual education program is Pennsylvania State College. Important in the organization at Pennsylvania State is an all-college visual education policy committee, of which the college librarian is chairman. The audio-visual aids library from time to time distributes to faculty members a mimeographed visual aids newsletter which directs attention to a variety of films, particularly through the use of annotated lists.

The Joint University Libraries building (Vanderbilt University, George Peabody College for Teachers, and Scarritt College for Christian Workers) provides facilities for a library-centered visual education program. Among other colleges in which motion picture service is centralized in the library are Antioch College, Corpus Christi Junior College, Rhode Island State College, Rockford College, San Francisco Junior College, West Virginia University, and Ward Belmont Junior College.

Though the number of colleges which

report centralizing motion picture service in their libraries is small (less than 10 per cent), it is significant that the colleges following this practice include junior colleges and universities, colleges with large enrolments and with small enrolments. Also, half of the reports indicate that in their judgment the library *should be* the centralizing agency, particularly for their own institution. A considerable number who believe the library should not be the centralizing agency qualify their judgment as follows: "Not at present. When the use of films is more general the library should be the centralizing agency." Somewhat in this spirit is the comment from the University of Texas: "Eventually there will be more use of auditory and visual materials in university teaching here, and I see no reason at all why the library should not play an important part in this development; however, it is inevitable that the beginning should occur at the grass roots—in the department."

### *Pro and Con the Library*

Although colleges were not asked to give arguments supporting their judgments concerning the place of the library in visual education service, a considerable number did present their reasons. Among the objections reported to centralizing visual education service in the library are the following:

Librarians are too busy with other things.

The library has inadequate space and lacks other necessary facilities.

Present administration of audio-visual education department is satisfactory.

Librarians are not trained in this field.

Offering motion picture service is a teaching problem which can better be handled by a faculty committee familiar with specific teaching needs.

In connection with the suggestion that

librarians are not trained in visual education, the College of William and Mary reports an interesting plan used there. The film library at William and Mary is a part of the department of library science. "By having the film library organized in this department, it serves the two-fold purpose of supplying films to faculty and students and of teaching library science students how to use the material. We find the latter is an important part of the education of librarians." This plan of training librarians in visual education is one to which all library schools must give attention if the trend toward centralizing visual education materials in the library develops.

Reasons cited in favor of centralizing motion picture service in the library include these:

The librarian in his work comes in contact with all departments of instruction.

The library is centrally located and is frequently visited by staff members.

Visual aids are generally recognized as related to and as supplementary to the use of books as aids to learning.

Motion pictures can readily be handled by the library organization.

The library is more available for use and reference than any other agency.

The library can promote effective use of films just as it now promotes effective use of books.

The library should be the center for *all* instructional materials.

Not only does a significant number of colleges report that the library should be the centralizing agency for motion pictures but a number report that plans are under consideration for such centralization. "I am tactfully and patiently working to that end at this time," reports a college dean. "We are working on this matter now, and hope soon to have motion pictures as a part of library service," the librarian of

a small college says. A university librarian says, "The administration is planning to adopt the policy of centralizing the buying, housing, and administration of all audio-visual material in the library. To that end we are now engaged in an inventory of all college-owned apparatus and other materials in the audio-visual field. The centralizing will be slow because of (1) limited space in our library building and (2) the necessity of re-educating faculty thinking on the subject."

One unexpected result of the survey question relating to centralizing motion picture service in the library was the following reaction from several college administrators: "We had not considered this possibility. It seems like a good idea and we are going to work on it."

### *Recordings*

The typical college provides records for use in teaching; only 11 per cent report no such facilities. The number of teachers using records varies from none (in twelve colleges) to 100 per cent (in two colleges). One hundred and fifty-three colleges report that from 10 to 25 per cent of their teachers use records as an aid to teaching at some time during the school year. Some idea of the prevalence of the practice may be gained from the following compilation:

#### SPREAD OF USE OF RECORDINGS IN LEADING INSTRUCTIONAL BRANCHES

<i>Departments Using Recordings</i>	<i>Number of Colleges Reporting Use</i>
Music	311
Speech	255
Foreign language	235
Drama	147
Science	55
Social studies	48

With the comparatively recent development of radio and recorded radio transcriptions, it is surprising and encouraging to find that recorded transcriptions of radio programs are available for teachers in more than one hundred colleges. St. Bonaventure College, New York, reports: "Our library has undertaken the beginning of what may be referred to as the Library of Living History, comprising radio recordings of important speeches."

Various colleges report using recorded transcripts of radio programs in such varied fields as social studies, natural science, radio, music, foreign languages, and philosophy. Other fields in which records are used include literature, shorthand, typing, religion, telephone technique, salesmanship, history, children's literature, Army and Navy instruction.

Educators are coming more and more to recognize that the curriculum of a college includes the sum total of student experience—in class, in dormitory, in the library, on the athletic field. This concept makes particularly important the practice of a considerable number of colleges in making records available to students for pleasure listening. In this connection the Carnegie music libraries were mentioned in several reports. In most colleges providing records for pleasure listening, students use listening rooms provided by the college. Antioch College, however, loans records to students for use in their rooms. Colby College has gone so far as to loan not only records but also portable phonographs to students. The library at Seton Hill College has a "listening table," so that students may use records with earphones at any time without disturbing patrons. At Georgetown University weekly concerts of recorded music were, until recently, broadcast by the college

radio station with commentary by the college librarian. These programs will be resumed at the close of the war.

In contrast with the use of motion pictures, where the trend is toward centralized administration, the tendency of colleges is to leave to individual departments or individual teachers responsibility for administering collections of recordings. Two hundred and forty-nine colleges follow this practice. In only sixty-four colleges is the administration of recordings centralized in the library. Although in a few additional colleges plans are under way for centralizing administration of recordings in the college library, the trend is less pronounced than with motion pictures.

Perhaps the situation of many colleges with respect to the administration of recordings was adequately voiced by the college dean who professed the need of help in solving the problems involved in instituting more effective methods of administering the program. It represents a possible field for further investigation.

#### *Summary and Implications*

1. Typically colleges make available to professors motion pictures and recordings as aids to teaching. This fact is particularly gratifying in view of the criticism often leveled against colleges with respect to the "lag" in utilizing current methods and materials.

2. A surprising number of colleges provide recorded transcriptions of radio programs as an aid to teaching. With technologically improved facilities for making recordings and with the educational value of many radio programs increasingly recognized, it is the judgment of the writer that recorded transcriptions of radio programs will be used with increasing frequency in higher education.

3. The extensive use of audio-visual aids in the teaching programs sponsored by the armed forces, the development of new teaching techniques in the armed forces, and the inevitable improvement in the quality of all audio-visual apparatus due to technological advancement, suggest a trend toward an increased use of audio-visual aids following the war.

4. At present comparatively few college libraries serve as the centralizing agency for audio-visual aids. This is the case with respect to recordings, transcriptions, and motion pictures.

5. There is a pronounced trend toward a library-centralized audio-visual education service in the colleges cooperating in the study. This trend is particularly notable in the case of motion picture service.

6. Since in the postwar world we can expect a constantly increased use of audio-visual aids in teaching, since in most colleges the administration of such aids needs to be centralized to be most effective, and since there is a trend toward library-centralization of the visual aids program, library schools must soon recognize that training in the administration of audio-visual aids is an important part of their curriculum.

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THE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY is building up its files of back numbers of its *Proceedings* and *Transactions*. If any library has issues of these publications which it does not wish to retain, the society will be pleased to receive them and pay transportation charges. Address the Society, Independence Square, Philadelphia 6.