

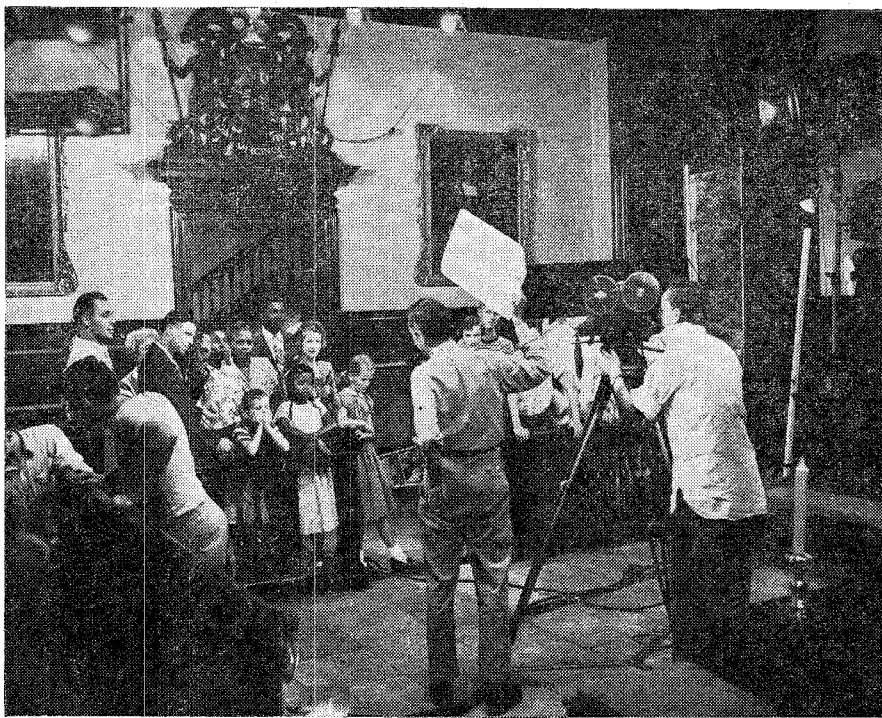
are a dozen years old. A good film should be useful for at least five years. It is a foolish producer who makes a film with any shorter-range ideas, and only a more foolish educational system would buy such a film. For timeliness, for current events and day-to-day discussions, the class and teacher will benefit more from newspapers and magazines, radio programs, and televised events. Films can deal with subjects of topical interest, but unless they present long-lasting ideas, they are usually rendered ineffective before their release.

**F**ILMS require especially coordinated services. Most public schools now own 16mm sound projectors and use films in classrooms.

An example of a fully operating film department in a large city is that of the St. Louis Public Schools. Established in 1904, it is (as far as is known) the oldest audio-visual department in the country. At present, 6,600 teaching films are owned by the Division of Audio-Visual Education, and are circulated throughout the city's schools to be seen by its 90,000 students. Teachers are kept up to date on the available materials by press-binder catalogues which list and describe the films, as well as a number of filmstrips and slides, recordings, booklets, and charts. The catalogue write-ups give suggestions on grade level and subject area use. Individual schools send in their compiled orders, representing requests of all teachers, forty-eight hours in advance of delivery, every week. Two hundred 16mm projectors are used in the school system (along with 510 radios, 178 filmstrip projectors, sixty-one tape recorders, and two television sets—the latter to be increased considerably when educational TV channels begin operations in St. Louis).

Films are helping to maintain a high level of interest in such up-to-date school systems as this. Modern youngsters, say in the sixth or seventh grade, know more about jet aviation, insect life, weather, and South America than most of us do in adulthood. Films alone are not responsible, but they are helping the spread of information, ideas, and interest in the classroom.

A high-school student was telling me that her father teases her about all the movies she sees in her classes. "But you know," she added, "sometimes I think he wishes he could see them himself." Are your schools equipped for using our most modern teaching devices? Are your teachers keeping up with the best and latest in films for learning? Are your children getting the kind of education you can be jealous of?

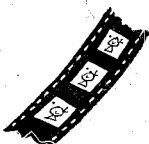


—From "Colonial Williamsburg."

Director Francis Thompson's crew shoots a scene of an educational film at Williamsburg.

## Mark-Time Movies

By VERA M. FALCONER, *visual aids editor, Scholastic magazine; author of "Filmstrips: A Descriptive Index."*



**W**HEN your child sees a movie in school he is quite likely to tell you about it. You probably think "that must have been fun!" But if your child tells you about seeing a filmstrip, unless you've seen one yourself, you may recall the old lantern slides and think "how dull!" or you may wonder "is this something new," or "just a piece of movie film."

A filmstrip (sometimes called slide-films or filmstrips) is none of these, and it certainly isn't a new device although it has progressed rapidly, evolving into a medium with its own characteristics. It is a series of still pictures—drawings, photographs, maps, charts—on 35mm film, carefully organized in a meaningful sequence. Printed captions generally appear on each frame, although some strips use no text whatever. These frames, or individual pictures, are projected one at a time at any speed desired. There is no standard length. The number of frames may vary from ten to a hundred. However, most run from thirty

to fifty frames, which are shown usually in fifteen to twenty minutes.

A well-produced and presented filmstrip is interesting and fun. As with all media, either the strip has that vital spark of imagination, or it doesn't. During recent years more and more of the new releases capture this essential quality.

According to a number of surveys, filmstrips are now used in almost every school. Filmstrip use has expanded phenomenally in postwar years. One major distributor found that his filmstrip sales had increased 100 per cent in one year. One New York City high-school social-studies department increased its library from four titles to eighty within five years. The audio-visual department in one city's school system found that the teachers had used about 1700 filmstrips per month during 1953, as many as they used during the entire year in 1937. What explanations can be offered?

The filmstrip is recognized as an excellent teaching tool with unique advantages. It can be tailored exactly to the needs of the individual class. Since each picture can be shown as briefly or as long as desired, emphasis can be placed where needed. Individual frames may be pre-selected or eliminated entirely. Since there is no sound track, the teacher

can amplify, summarize, or interpret as dictated by class needs.

Its greatest advantage is the possibility it offers for active participation by the class. Children may ask questions, discuss, or comment as the strip is shown. Sometimes, children viewing a motion picture have a question about something they see on the screen. They do try to remember until the film is finished, but this can be difficult. With filmstrips, questions are asked and answered immediately while interest is hot and the picture is right on the screen.

The filmstrip, then, is a flexible, adaptable tool which can be closely integrated with other class activities. Of course, much of the success of any strip depends upon the teacher, since her personality is constantly injected into the presentation. Hence, the teacher can make or break its effectiveness to a large extent.

Building up a filmstrip library does not stretch the budget too far. The purchase prices are comparatively low—ranging from about two to five dollars for black-and-white titles and from six to nine for color subjects. Recently, the trend has been toward production of sets or series—decreasing the prices of individual titles and providing better teaching units.

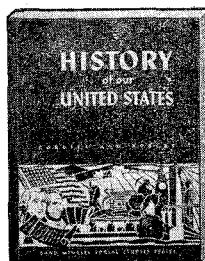
**F**ILMSTRIPS do not become "dated" easily, and are added to a school's library for use in subsequent years. Many, too, are useful in more than one class. Small, light, and practically indestructible, filmstrips present a simpler storage problem than other visual materials.

The filmstrip projector, a major factor in the widespread use of this media, is considerably cheaper than a sound motion-picture projector: popular models sell for less than one-fifth the price of comparable motion picture projectors. It is light, easy to move from room to room, and extremely simple to operate. Even lower grade pupils manage it well. A school can have several such projectors, for the price of one movie projector, facilitating physical scheduling. Many models for all purposes are readily available. There is even a Coleman lantern projector, powered by kerosene or gasoline, for non-electrified schools.

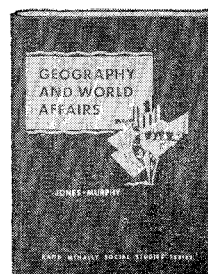
Literally thousands of filmstrips are on the market. More strips are produced annually than classroom movies because they are cheaper to make, physically easier to handle, and cheaper for schools to purchase. There are not as many producers, however. Some 150 to 200 sources cover the field quite completely, including those offering only a few titles. There are

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not more than fifteen major producers. Some are commercial companies producing directly for the school market. Many of these also produce classroom films. Others are institutional in nature, like the National Audubon Society or the American Heart Association. Government offices are another source: various departments in our own Federal Government like the Public Health Service or the Department of Agriculture; offices of other governments like the Australian News and Information Bureau or the British Information Services. Some are offered by business and industry, too, like the Association of American Railroads, United Airlines, and General Mills.

**T**HE range covered by filmstrips is enormous—from preschool to college, from fairy tales to atomic physics. More are available, however, for elementary grades and junior-high school than for other groups. Some are very, very good and others are equally poor.

Selection can be a problem, especially for the novice, because of this wide range. There are some helpful sources of information available, however. Although filmstrips are not reviewed as completely or by as many writers as are educational movies, all of the periodicals in the field list describe and sometimes evaluate the new releases. The H. W. Wilson Company's "Filmstrip Guide"—an annual publication with periodical supplements much like their "Educational Film Guide"—is an excellent reference. It describes, classifies, grades, and, in many cases, evaluates filmstrips from most of the producers.

For preschool and primary grades there are many charming strips. Standard fairy tales, like "Puss in Boots" or "Rumplestiltskin," are offered by several producers in color drawings. These are mainly for fun. In addition, there are primary health and hygiene strips; little social studies stories about subjects such as community helpers or seasons on a farm. Most of this primary material uses color drawings. Only a few use actual photographs.

Both the elementary grades and junior-high school have a much wider choice. However, more strips are available for social studies and science than for other subjects. Some attempts have been made in arithmetic and grammar. While useful in many ways, these generally lack real visualization. After all, addition and verbs are pretty abstract, hard to visualize without merely being "cute." Good filmstrip production is needed in these two areas.

Many of the strips used in senior



A television program started this game.

high are also suitable for college courses and adult groups. For instance, "Power Means Plenty" produced for the Twentieth Century Fund is a really brisk visual presentation of a rather abstract economic concept.

Filmstrips on art history and appreciation appeal to an even wider spread. There are comprehensive series on ancient art and modern art, and strips showing the work of individual artists are released by several producers. The "how-to-do" strip finds a place in art instruction, too. There are series for primary art and another for intermediate art, describing and demonstrating methods of painting, weaving, clay modeling, cutting, and pasting.

The filmstrip is peculiarly suited for step-by-step instruction. Extreme close-ups, cut-aways, enlargements, and simplification are all possible. Pictures can be held on the screen while actual work progresses. Easy reference to earlier frames refreshes the memory. Naturally, producers offer how-to-do material in many fields: automéchanics, electrical work, airplane maintenance, dark-room procedures, radio servicing, arc welding.

In today's highly visualized world, with pictures an integral part of our life, our schools need more tools such as filmstrips. They not only enhance, expand, and motivate learning, but assist students in developing a sense of selection and discrimination of the pictorial. Yet, despite their many advantages, too few schools are making adequate use of them.

## The Disc Library

By THEODOSIA STRATEMEYER, director of Audio-Education, Inc.



**"T**HE three R's," a teacher observed recently, "actually begin with an L." In their emphasis

on reading and writing, schools too often take for granted the ability to listen. And too often they confuse listening with hearing.

From an early age, the child hears, that is, responds to sounds. When he reaches school age he already knows the subtle inflections in his parents' voices that mean he has reached the line between action or trouble. He has learned to shut out sounds that are uninteresting or displeasing to him. He has learned to attend to voices, music, or noises related to his immediate interest or the things with which he is concerned. It is this ability to select that the child brings to school and that is so often considered adequate.

The ability to hear, to tune in or tune out, is not enough. It has become increasingly clear that the power to listen must also be developed. It must be taught just as directly as the ability to read or write must be taught. Listening is a basic part of life; it is a basic path through which information is gathered, through which reading and writing and arithmetic are taught. If the development of listening ability is to be part of children's education, there must be materials for its accomplishment.

In much of the recent discussion of education the "audio" part of audiovisual is coming to be recognized increasingly as an important factor in learning. What are the different kinds of audio materials available? How should they be used? Why are they important for the education of children?

The three most commonly used audio materials are radio, records, and tape and transcription recordings. Each has its own special function and use for schools, yet all are very closely related. It is with the latter two, especially records, that this article is concerned.

There are two basic types of records. Oldest and most familiar is the commercial record. Their titles and brightly colored covers have amused and fascinated children for years. Many a parent has been driven to distraction by the repeated playing of one of the records which delighted their youngster. He is surprised and fascinated to discover how easily a child remembers