



## Thoughts for School

**T**HE effective use of audio-visual materials in schools involves more than a mere outlay of money for projection equipment and films. There are an estimated 100,000 sound projectors used in schools today, yet that is not the whole story. All over the country there is a crying need for classrooms properly designed and fitted to audio-visual needs, for coherently organized film services provided direct to the teacher, for community-based film libraries that make a sensible contribution to educational needs. Without these outside services even the most enthusiastic teacher cannot use films well and consistently.

In Rochester, New York, this summer I heard of the Board of Education's plans to build a new high school which, it is hoped, will be a model of audio-visual perfection. Among the specific recommendations of an advisory committee were complete light control for each classroom, and conference-type rooms with movable seats and tables. If all goes well, the new school will also provide each teacher with immediately available equipment to suit all classroom needs—overhead projection, opaque projector, filmstrip, two-by-two slides, 16mm sound motion-picture projector, tape recorder, and three-speed record player, as well as radio and television receivers. Additional plans call for the complete use of audio-visual materials in the high school's large and small auditoriums, and an instructional materials resource center has been designated as the facilitating step in "one-stop service" for the teacher's convenience. These recommendations have yet to be correlated with those of many other committees.

In talking with Dr. James M. Spinning, recently retired superintendent of schools, and with Dr. Paul Smith, newly appointed assistant superintendent, I learned that there is considerable interest within the Rochester educational system to have complete audio-visual facilities intelligently incorporated into the new building. Certainly there are reasons why Rochester should want to lead the nation in this respect. One is that its current audio-visual director, Dr. Paul Reed, is recognized as a national figure in the field; Dr. Reed also edits the national magazine *Educational Screen*. One more obvious reason is that the city is a world center in the

manufacture of photographic materials.

Lest anyone question whether I am placing too much emphasis on the physical facilities of the classroom for film showings, let me offer a summary of my own teaching experiences during the past year. In a college course on the history and development of the motion picture, I have been showing movies as a necessary part of the studies. This is not a pioneer venture on my part. Similar courses are offered in hundreds of colleges and schools—and the course at my college is now in its tenth year. By now it has instructed over 700 students in the art of the motion picture, and incidentally has run four instructors quite ragged.

Let me picture for you the room in which my film course was held: an ordinary classroom with movable chairs (good), black-out shades on all the windows (good), but old and in poor condition (not so good), and at times inexplicably going up by themselves with a loud bang right in the middle of the movie (what a nuisance to climp up on top of the radiator and pull them down again!). The room however was cool, even in summer, and ventilation was not a problem. But imagine this: the electrical outlet in the room was not in working order, or perhaps it used the wrong current, but whatever the reason, you could not get a connection to run the movie projector. What we had to do was to add twenty feet of extension cord and plug it into an outlet in the room next door. Our classroom did not have a wall screen which could be rolled up or down at will—I was expected to bring into class a 40x40 inch tripod screen for each showing (we showed movies in every class session). I had to book and order each film from local commercial libraries, and in addition I was expected to call for and return the 16mm projector which I had reserved for use in my class.

There was (and still is) no central film service in the college—if the projector didn't work I could call one of the janitors or electricians, who might or might not have time to help me, if indeed he could. If one of the films did not arrive on time, there was no place for me to get a last-minute substitute. (Interestingly enough, there were some good films on the premises, but they were owned by

special departments which did not want their films used in other departments.) I used an ancient projector, but often there were new ones idle. These too were the special properties of departments, and I could not use them. Once, however, when my take-up reel disappeared overnight, I was able to borrow one from the science department—after giving a solemn pledge that I would not leave the building without returning it. It's an opportunistic way to get a take-up reel, but my promise did enable me to show the scheduled films that day.

This is not fantasy, it is fact. This happened only last year, in a well-recognized college which occupies a modern and comparatively well-equipped building. I am told, by professional educators, that disorganization of this kind is much more likely to happen in colleges than in high schools, and more likely to happen in high schools than in primary schools. Still it is shameful and outrageous to expect teachers to attempt modern and energetic teaching methods in conditions such as these. Not only were the conditions bad, but there seems to be little or no way of bettering them—until a central audio-visual service is established. My predecessors and I have each made contributions towards improving the immediate circumstances which involve our class—but it is a long and frustrating fight for one teacher to attempt.

**I**T IS too much to ask of a teacher. No one could be more of a film enthusiast than I am, but it is too much to ask of me. Yet, in modified versions, this is the sort of thing we are asking of many teachers. It is a particular hardship on the younger ones who have had special training in the use of audio-visual materials. Only by providing facilities within the school will these teachers be able to continue using films in the classroom.

In schools already built we shall have to be satisfied with made-over facilities. But it is heartbreaking to see new schools going up without proper pre-planning for audio-visual materials. Much more popular these days, and considerably easier, is the





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effort to make the school look like a floral hot-house, with glass walls to make the students think they are outdoors when—no matter how thick or thin the glass—they are after all in a schoolroom. This so-called “modern” architecture has not proven practical for homes (too hot in summer, too cold in winter, and, strangely enough, not enough actual window space for proper ventilation). In classrooms it has one additional hazard—the bright glare of steady sunlight is poor for reading and other close eye work. The rooms cannot be darkened easily (if at all) for the showing of films and other projected visual materials. While it might be wonderful to have special recreation and gymnasium rooms designed in this open-sided manner, it seems a terrible mistake to build whole schools so thoughtlessly. Worse still, we have to expect them to last for fifty years or more, and do a modern job of education.

You can do something to help out in this situation. When a new school is planned for your community, see that attention is given in the earliest stages to planning its audio-visual facilities. You cannot leave these matters to the architects—with only a handful of exceptions they are the most backward of all in this respect.

In this connection, you may find it useful to have copies of three booklets in the series “Planning Schools for Use of Audio-Visual Materials,” which are concerned, individually, with classrooms, auditoriums, and the AV instructional materials center. They cost \$1 each, and are available from the Department of Audio-Visual Instruction, National Education Association, 1201 Sixteenth St., N.W., Washington 6, D.C. The DAVI can also assist and advise your teachers in the use of classroom films and the maintenance of film libraries within the school system. Individual membership in DAVI is \$5 a year, which includes subscription to the independently published *Educational Screen*.

You can also keep an eye out for modern trends in school designs. The most encouraging example yet pointed out to me are two new high schools in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Here attention has been paid to all the peripheral details so important to an easy-going audio-visual program. Each room has black-out venetian blinds, easy to manipulate and effective in shutting out the light. Instead of having to string electric cords all over the place, a jack in the back of the room supplies current to the speaker in the front. Each projector arrives on its own wheeled table, and door sills have been levelled at the bottom to ease the pushing. As my informant described it to me, “Show-

ing a film in class there is a simple procedure—no mess, no bother, and no hazards.”

Just as it is important for the teacher to be able to show films easily, so it is imperative that good films be within easy calling distance. The school system, if it has its own film library, should have films of reliable quality.

Let me close this plea for better film facilities in your schools with a statement by Celia Anderson, director of the New York University Film Library. In a recent panel discussion meeting of New York audio-visual leaders, Miss Anderson said in regard to the NYU collection: “We are concerned largely with films which describe and interpret the relation of man to himself, to others, and to his environment. We tend to be selective and our intention is to add the best of the films available (to our collection). We have long held the view that films of intrinsic worth have a lasting quality; that they have a permanent, fixed value which has little to do with the passing of time. . . . Finally, when we look at films we look to find among them those which in our opinion are most likely to provide an authentic experience.”

Are films being shown in your community's schools? Are there suitable audio-visual facilities in each classroom? Is attention given to bringing into easy reach of your teachers the best possible selection of creatively educational films? I just thought I'd ask. —CECILE STARR.

## 16mm Notes

“THE ST. JOHN'S STORY” is a brand-new 16mm release about the unique study program offered at St. John's College, with sidelights on recreation and sports activities. The film was made to introduce young students to the college, which incidentally is now operated coeducationally. Narrated by Mark Van Doren, “The St. John Story” is a twenty-five-minute color film produced by Fordel Films. Enquiries regarding its use should be directed to the Public Relations Dept., St. John's College, Annapolis, Maryland.

**BEST FILM BUYS** of the season for educational libraries are the new discussion films, produced by the National Film Board of Canada, in the series entitled “What Do You Think?” Designed primarily for use at junior and senior high-school levels, the films were made “to encourage discussions of basic social and moral questions” under the general heading of good citizenship. Titles of the films are “One Man's Opinion” (6 min.), “The Majority Vote” (7 min.), and “The Honest Truth” (5 min.). Roughly they pose these questions, respectively: Should a lone dissenter “give in” just to make things unanimous? Should an elected representative follow the will of the constituents, even against her better judgment? How truthful can honest criticism be among friends?

Despite defects in the sound tracks



## Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich

THE NOES HAVE IT

In the miscellany that follows you need simply put a check mark over the proper name which in your view represents the proper answer. Get eight right and you pass, nine and you almost made it, ten and you made it. Answers on page 63.

1. One of these poets was not a lifelong bachelor: Swinburne, Tennyson, Whitman, Whittier.
2. One of these American poets did not set foot on foreign soil: Emily Dickinson, Frost, Millay, Poe.
3. One of these British novelists did not visit the United States: Galsworthy, Hardy, Priestley, Trollope.
4. One of these American writers was not born in Indiana: Dreiser, Howells, Joaquin Miller, Tarkington.
5. One of these American writers did not die abroad: Joel Barlow, Stephen Crane, Harte, O. Henry.
6. One of these poets did not marry twice: Browning, Emerson, Longfellow, Shelley.
7. One of these four authors did not write something called “Endymion”: Bryant, Benjamin Disraeli, Keats, Lowell.
8. One of these writers was not born in 1819: Emily Brontë, George Eliot, Melville, Whitman.
9. One of these British writers did not die abroad: Rupert Brooke, Defoe, Shelley, Wilde.
10. One of these American writers was not born west of the Mississippi: Robinson Jeffers, Jack London, Mark Twain, William Allen White.