



# MUSEUM MOVIES

The Museum  
of Modern Art  
and the Birth of  
Art Cinema

HAIDEE WASSON



# SIMPSON

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*The Museum of Modern Art and the  
Birth of Art Cinema*

HAIDEE WASSON

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*For Jan and Judy,  
my very own dynamic duo*





# Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xi
1. MAKING CINEMA A MODERN ART	1
2. MANNERED CINEMA / MOBILE THEATERS: FILM EXHIBITION, 16MM, AND THE NEW AUDIENCE IDEAL	32
3. THE MASS MUSEOLOGY OF THE MODERN	68
4. AN AWKWARD AND DANGEROUS TASK: THE FILM LIBRARY TAKES SHAPE	110
5. REARGUARD EXHIBITION: THE FILM LIBRARY'S CIRCULATING PROGRAMS	149
6. ENDURING LEGACIES	185
<i>Appendix: Film Programs of the Museum of Modern Art, 1934–1949</i>	195
<i>Notes</i>	209
<i>Bibliography</i>	275
<i>Index</i>	299



# Illustrations

1. Iris Barry and John Abbott, ca. 1936	21
2. <i>Museum of Modern Art Film Library Bulletin</i> , 1941 (MoMA)	23
3. Department of Education, film room, American Museum of Natural History, 1937	45
4. William Lescaze and Edward Warburg at Museum of Modern Art opening, 1939	70
5. Herman A. Sievers, senior messenger, American Museum of Natural History, 1922	80
6. Dr. Roy Chapman Andrews broadcasts from the American Museum of Natural History for CBS <i>School of the Air</i> , 1938	86
7. Amelia Earhart, John Dewey, and Dr. Charles R. Richards announce winning objects for the Machine Art Show, 1934	100
8. John Abbott and Iris Barry hunting for films in Europe, 1936	116
9. Pickfair event, 1935	131
10. Gloria Swanson and Iris Barry, 1941	142
11. Joan Crawford and Iris Barry, ca. 1940	143
12. Lecture at the American Museum of Natural History, 1916	154
13. Elementary schoolchildren attending a lecture at the American Museum of Natural History, 1937	154
14. Graph of "The Museum and Its Public," Museum of Modern Art, 1940	155
15. Map of "Circulating Exhibitions and Film Library Programs," Museum of Modern Art, 1940	156

16. "Museum of Modern Art Film Library" (intertitle), ca. 1937	165
17. "Expressionismus" (intertitle), ca. 1937	165
18. "Warning Shadows" (intertitle), ca. 1937	165
19. Film theater and auditorium (Titus I), Museum of Modern Art	178
20. Crowds waiting to see films at the Museum of Modern Art, 1940	179

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# 1 Making Cinema a Modern Art

In 1935 the fledgling Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, announced the formation of the Film Library, a department tasked with saving and exhibiting films that were in danger of being forever lost to public view. At this point in American history, the life cycle of a typical film was extremely brief; the bulk of commercial features disappeared quickly from movie screens, never to appear again. Viewing art films and what we today call movie classics was still a highly unusual activity, confined to major urban centers and only a handful of theaters. As such, there was widespread skepticism about the pairing of such a popular and spectacular amusement with the comparatively elite and sacral space of the museum, striking many as novel and, at times, odd. Why see old films? What was a film museum? What did the ephemeral and entertaining value of film have to do with enduring and edifying proclamations of art?

A local New York newspaper described MoMA's film venture:

At the film library Salon at the Museum of Modern Art the subjects receive a lengthy foreword as a sort of reminder (or warning) of the type of film its product represents and an "analysis" of its meaning to world culture in general. But the films are just as jaundiced, just as slapstick, just as antediluvian as those in the nickelodeon. . . . A visit to the subterranean chamber of the museum is rewarding . . . if not for the historical implications, then certainly for the opportunity of seeing Jimmy Cagney in a cake-eater's suit and Joan Blondell in a "fish-bowl" hat.<sup>1</sup>

Such reports, typical at the time, indicate that main-street movies continued to be seen as dramatically different from museum art; clear dissonance between their content, modes of display, and manners of looking persisted. Marble sculptures of gun-toting villains or oil portraits of gravity-defying heroines were—by all official art histories—nonexistent. Paintings were

not customarily viewed in darkened theaters by captive, seated audiences. Movies were not accompanied by docent lectures, dates of origin, or didactic placards. Early film screenings at MoMA confirm the peculiarity of the project. Visitors to the museum's auditorium regularly demonstrated uncertainty about very basic things: How should they behave when watching movies in an art museum? MoMA's filmgoers enacted precious little of the dignified and controlled behavior so eagerly sought by museum administrators and film programmers. They talked loudly during screenings. They argued aggressively over seats. They laughed at tragic heroes and weeping women, cackling with abandon at the sight of violent deaths. They arrived at films late and left early, bumping into fellow viewers, disrupting the narrative flow and attentive engagement. Lacking established norms for watching museum movies, audience members became participants in saloon-style conflicts. Reaching Hollywood proportions, film viewers engaged in shouting matches, punctuated occasionally by projectile objects. Such bad behavior occurred frequently enough that the Film Library's first curator, Iris Barry, had a slide projector permanently installed in the museum's auditorium, equipped with a slide that read: "If the disturbance in the auditorium does not cease, the showing of this film will be discontinued." If after the film had been stopped and the warning slide displayed, the audience still did not compose itself, the house lights would come up, and the show would be declared over. Charles Turner, a regular member of MoMA's early audiences, recalls that sometimes Barry's rebuke would come only ten minutes into the picture. To further ensure decorum, and to bolster her own disciplinary capacities, Barry reserved herself a permanent seat in the auditorium, alongside a phone connecting her instantly to the projectionist. She was a common fixture in the theater, regularly monitoring both image quality and audience comportment.<sup>2</sup> Taking films seriously at MoMA was neither simple nor obvious, even to otherwise properly civilized museumgoers. It required imposing persistent institutional discipline and entailed recognizing that the museum's film audience would, in fact, persist in misbehaving.

This disjuncture between the ideal and the actual museum audience for MoMA's films provides a telling index to the broader conditions in which the status of cinema was being markedly transformed, from ephemeral entertainment to enduring cultural monument. In its short forty-year life, film's form and function had changed considerably. By the mid-1930s, its content and style had evolved from brief, one-shot scenes of everyday life to feature-length narratives demonstrating aesthetic complexity and thematic sophistication. Black-and-white actualities yielded to vivid animated

color. Single silent filmstrips gave way to multireel synchronized sound. Rather than anonymous performers, select film actors became identifiable, international stars. The places in which one might view a film extended beyond Edison's peep show Kinetoscope and the polyglot space of the nickelodeon to include grand picture palaces and ivy-clad universities. Writing about cinema was similarly transformed, from occasional derisive mention in the respectable press or celebratory tract in the protective pages of industry rags to sustained monographs and specialized journals addressing the history, aesthetic distinctiveness, politics, and social and psychological impact of cinema.

The changes to film form, film theory, and social practice outlined here were punctuated by a crucial material fact of 1930s film culture. While the industrial organization, images, ideas, and public spaces collectively referred to as the institution of cinema had secured a place in national cultures and international governance, films themselves did not fare so well. Despite the profound influence cinema exercised on conceptions of time, space, knowledge, industry, nation, and leisure, only a year after their initial release most films could not be seen. Still subject to the perils that similarly befell other popular entertainments, many films were recycled for their material-chemical components or were simply dumped into the ocean once their initial theatrical run was exhausted. In the late 1920s, the shift to synchronized sound further spurred the recycling industry that flourished in the wake of the uncountable silent films deemed more valuable for their silver content than for their seemingly obsolete stories, stylistic innovations, or stars.<sup>3</sup> The majority of films that remained were swept into ill-kept studio vaults or stock footage warehouses, the survival of their images further threatened by the flammability and fragility of the nitrate stock on which they were printed.

Assertions of film's archival value persisted from the inception of the medium. The occasional individual exalted the value of films as essential records of everyday life or of state pageantry.<sup>4</sup> Individual inventors and filmmakers donated select films or artifacts to libraries, museums, and repositories.<sup>5</sup> A series of haphazard film exhibits of select films and related paraphernalia were held in libraries, in museums, and at art expositions throughout the United States and Europe.<sup>6</sup> As film came to be thought of as a distinct medium with an essence, a growing group of cinephiles and writers persistently lamented that the material traces of film's history—films, production and publicity materials, program notes—were dangerously scattered and in jeopardy of being forever lost.<sup>7</sup> The desire to actually see old films was a prominent thread in the growing fabric of film

writing, both specialized and popular. Commentators bemoaned the fact that once moving images had flitted across screens, it was nearly impossible to see them again. Would-be repeat viewers were prey to the unfriendly logics of commercial exhibition and were forced unhappily to chase films as they moved down the film food chain, out of prestige picture palaces to third-run theaters in the suburbs or in neighboring towns and so on.<sup>8</sup> Or, similarly prohibitive, seeing old movies entailed paying the exorbitant fees and viewing the uneven collections of the growing but disorganized field of nontheatrical film rental agencies. Despite what seems today the obvious utility of saving and seeing yesterday's films, forty years after the first public projections in North America and Europe, the cries and complaints of critics, writers, and fans yielded few results. No American institution could proclaim sustained success with the simple mandate of saving and exhibiting films as objects of lasting cultural, aesthetic, or historical value.<sup>9</sup> In short, when the Film Library formed, no material infrastructure had been successfully built to secure lasting and studied attention to films themselves as had been done for paintings, sculptures, books, music, plays, and even photographs.

With the founding of the Film Library, significant steps had been taken to alter the ephemeral condition of film's cultural and material life. The Rockefeller Foundation, a prominent philanthropy, provided the bulk of the long-needed funds required to design and build a new kind of American film institution. Armed with an ambitious plan, library staff began hunting for films in both obvious and unusual places: basements, attics, junk shops, scrap firms, and the poorly maintained vaults of extant and defunct production companies. They collected a considerable range of films: old and new, popular and eclectic, American and European. Production material, film stills, memoirs, correspondence, journals, books, magazines, pamphlets, and exhibition materials were also eagerly sought out. The Film Library gradually became an archive assembled from film history's sprawled and varied remains. Feeding the interest in specialized and repeat viewing, it also became an elaborate exercise in nontheatrical distribution and exhibition. Relying on the emergent network of 16mm projectors, it selected 35mm films, frequently reduced their size, and arranged them into programs. Packaged and circulated to national and international educational organizations, or shown at the museum itself, these films accompanied production information, printed notes, and lectures. MoMA's film public, while perhaps more diverse and dissenting than initially imagined, consequently and quickly grew.

The Film Library mobilized particular assumptions about film, art, and audiences. Specifically, it declared film a modern art with an important history. It provided cinema a prominent institutional home alongside other traditional and emergent aesthetic forms. Select films were announced as examples of a uniquely American art, influential on world film styles. MoMA asserted that this new modern art should be collected, saved, studied, and, most important, seen. Film Library staff confidently addressed what they presumed to be a national, interested, and capable audience eager to watch, think, and talk about films in a manner imbued with the authority and resources of a museum. The Film Library was an unusual cultural configuration predicated on a mode of exhibition unfamiliar to the vast number of filmgoers and museum attendees. It culled from members of both constituencies, combining concepts of film art, film history, and practices of popular exhibition with concepts of art history and modes of elite display. As it did so, a new kind of audience became visible, sustained by the institutional logics of a privately funded yet publicly mandated film department and art museum. In short, MoMA's was a then-unfamiliar exercise that laid an enduring foundation and helped to create a common sense about cinema: film is an art with a history that matters to a public aware of its place in a differentiated field of cultural practice.

In 1936, Carl Bohnenberger, a member of the National Board of Review, wrote: "Perhaps at some time in the future, possibly not very far away, the slender thread of permanency of the film may be strengthened and lengthened. I imagine that each of us will have our own library of films and some simple means of projection—and we shall be able to experience, as often as we choose, the presence of a great film."<sup>10</sup> His view was widely shared by a committed few interested in redefining dominant conceptions of cinema. Today it is clear that film history, film art, and watching movies outside of commercial theaters are not only intelligible and lasting concepts but also profitable ones. Film audiences have, nevertheless, changed considerably. Studios continue to mine their libraries and market movie classics, lost treasures, director's cuts, limited editions, and digitally remastered originals on electronic and digital formats such as VHS and DVD. Boutique and independent distributors do the same. Yet these titles are sold to an audience that is dispersed, fragmented, and frequently based in private homes rather than public theaters. In the 1930s, the conditions required to effect such specialized cultural formations—a vast store of films, a highly coordinated distribution and marketing system for a range of film types, hundreds of millions of individualized screens—were the stuff of utopian

prognostication or dystopian naysayers. Throughout the interwar period, the ideas and practices of these specialized film cultures unfolded on an uneven and underfunded field. Not yet deemed commercially viable, smaller circuits designed to foster individualized and idiosyncratic, local or special-interest cinema were a collection of loosely related organizations, networks, and audiences. Churches, amateur hobbyists, universities, little cinemas, and an assortment of schools and museums had haphazardly begun to produce and distribute or exhibit films as regular elements of their mandates.<sup>11</sup> Their understanding and use of cinema varied dramatically. The particularities of film as a unique expressive form, an art, a technology, or a medium with its own social history were rarely—if ever—the focus or organizing principle of their activities.

Among the few emergent cultures specifically dedicated to film qua film, the boundaries identifying films and filmmakers by now-familiar categories such as experimental, art, popular, amateur, or professional were blurred by the inchoate infrastructures that in practice supported a range of activities.<sup>12</sup> The core art cinema institutions, which have tended to pose themselves explicitly against commercial film culture and formed around concepts of aesthetic distinctiveness and repertory—art houses, university film programs, film festivals—emerged in full force only after World War II.<sup>13</sup> When the Film Library was established, there was neither such a fixed circuit of theaters or special venues nor publicly funded agencies that otherwise might have provided readily identifiable cultural or financial corroboration for its project. Institutions that exhibited films, in particular, struggled to support the most basic access to popular or noteworthy films of the past, or to feature films made outside dominant American commercial systems, those made by American independent filmmakers, or so-called foreign films. For instance, the late 1920s saw the emergence of little cinemas dedicated to expanding the commonsense understanding of what constitutes *current* cinema. These theaters, which showed non-American and repertory films, struggled to survive in cities such as New York, Baltimore, Chicago, and Philadelphia.<sup>14</sup> A related but beleaguered film society movement, reasonably healthy from the mid-1920s in Paris, Berlin, and London, only began to take a firm hold more than a decade later in the United States and Canada, after MoMA was founded.<sup>15</sup>

During the 1930s, film archives also became important sites for an expanded idea of the cinematic institution. Such archives formed in Berlin, Moscow, Paris, London, and Sweden. National organizations such as the British Film Institute, the National Film Board of Canada, and a range of Soviet programs also emerged as powerful articulations of nation, film,

and educated citizenship. Some of these organizations saved films; some had more elaborate mandates to show and educate about and with film.<sup>16</sup> These were crucial and transformative projects, assuring film's place in an emergent and international cultural field. They also formalized the earliest discussion of cinema's role in modern institutions of state, crystallizing ongoing debates that co-articulated film with ideals of nation, history, collection, and education. MoMA's Film Library joined these organizations at the intersection of these sizable discussions. This book, however, rather than focusing on the project of collecting or archiving films, concentrates on one aspect of MoMA's project: its efforts to make select films more visible to an emergent public under the rubric of art and history. In the most general sense, the Film Library was a powerful coordinator of resources and promulgator of discourses about cultural value and productive leisure. Its earliest and most significant impact was in coordinating and mobilizing a set of ideas and practices of watching movies. Undergirded by archival logics, MoMA established a distinct mode of exhibition, and by extension, of viewing, films. It presupposed that noncommercial and nontheatrical exhibition constituted an essential element of the cinematic and civic infrastructure. As a result, it contributed inestimably to shaping a much wider field of debate about culture, museums, and modern life, securing a stage for film in the ongoing drama of precisely what objects and media matter within the politics of cultural value and visual knowledge.

Changing sensibilities about film viewing as an organized and serious endeavor take on greater meaning when the distinct material characteristics of film culture are also considered. The film object was significantly different from the book, the *objet d'art*, or even the forms of recorded and printed music that preceded it. In the absence of individualized theaters and small, affordable film collections—a scenario not widely available until some fifty-five to sixty years after the establishment of the Film Library with the rise of the VCR—movies could not be perused on shelves or accessed at will. They could not be mounted on walls or subsumed by elaborately choreographed and rationalized display techniques. To watch a film required more than a lamp and a place to sit. Technologies of exhibition such as projectors, regular electrical current, large spaces such as auditoriums, and sometimes fireproof booths and trained projectionists were essential.<sup>17</sup> Crucially, the business of film was shaped by a system of legal rights—copy and exhibition rights, in particular—that were more effective and easier to enforce than were similar rights attached to reading books or viewing paintings or listening to music. This system evolved out of an industry that worked hard to manage the reproducibility of film images,



upon which it both depended in order to create sizable and often disconnected audiences, and against which it struggled to prevent bootleg copies and unauthorized screenings. As a result, film prints were often rented by exhibitors for very short periods and then sent on. Repeat reading or viewing, a luxury easily afforded by a novel or even a magazine, required illegal duplication and an elaborate display infrastructure, or it entailed unprofitable rental contracts as interested audiences diminished in size.

The film object was like no other cultural object, its basic materiality and expense rendering it more beholden to industrial logics and the need for large audiences. Its most immediate meaning or effects unraveled in the uncertain space between its many screens and the unknowable crowds that gathered around them. Like other public entertainments before it, this yielded a considerable range of efforts to contain and control films and the social spaces in which they appeared. Anxieties about the deleterious effects of cinema resonated with the wider concerns about urbanization, industrialization, immigration, and the rapid pace of technological change that characterized American culture in the first third of the twentieth century. Concurrently, working-class and middle-class women became more visible in public spaces. Polyglot cities teemed with African American, European, and Asian communities that threatened homogeneous ideals of an Anglo-Caucasian norm. The laboring classes were demanding greater rights and generating powerful collective voices under increasing unionization and strike actions. Efforts to contain these transformations came cloaked in the language of Americanization, spiritual and moral health, and temperance. Culture played an important role in these projects. Libraries, museums, theater, and opera were all institutions seeking to conscript books, art, plays, and music to a social politic affirming dominant white Anglo-Saxon ideals.<sup>18</sup> Cinema, like the amusement park, city streets, public fairs, and dance halls, provided the other half of this cultural divide; it was similarly conscripted as a stage in contests to manage the changing face of public life. Debates about leisure, while extremely complex, were frequently linked to more fundamental fears of difference—race, class, and gender—that threatened the largely white, native-born middle classes. Projects such as MoMA's to make cinema respectable must be understood alongside such struggles to, in Tony Bennett's terms, make culture "useful" in these conflicts.<sup>19</sup> That is, efforts to make cinema into art or to make "better films" have long been linked to institutional attempts to organize and contain the seemingly threatening moment in which spectators encounter and otherwise engage with screens and with each other.

Movies wore many hats within reform and regulatory politics. By the mid-1930s, a range of cultural institutions were already seeking to use films to further their respective projects of civic uplift. Select films—from anthropological and travel films to animated shorts—had long found their way into the public programs of libraries, churches, and national organizations like the YMCA.<sup>20</sup> Early on, itinerant projectionists, educational lecturers, museums, and universities embraced film for its fidelitous qualities or its ability to enliven a subject such as geography, anthropology, or natural history.<sup>21</sup> In addition, discourses about good cinema circulated in the journals and publications of these same organizations, likening films to other ostensibly affirmative cultural forms and media: books, lantern slides, encyclopedias, didactic display. These institutions imbued films with a *de facto* sense of purpose and utility, presenting less a main-street amusement and more what was thought to be a mind-elevating and moral experience.<sup>22</sup> Such developments complement a common narrative in film studies that characterizes film history as shaped by an impetus toward standardization and regulation of cinema as an institution. This includes the adoption of classical Hollywood narrative and style, as well as modes of production, distribution, and exhibition. From the early period of the medium's development, with its close links to nonnarrative urban attractions and unruly crowds, cinema's official incarnations grew to be more accurately understood as formulaic, predictable, and homogeneous. Such changes developed roughly alongside Hollywood itself: dedicated movie theaters, restrictive codes of behavior, and identifiable aesthetic conventions.<sup>23</sup> Libraries, museums, and schools similarly sought to carve out a cinematic institution far removed from the seemingly unpredictable masses.

Yet, despite the tendency toward standardization, anxieties about cinema in general and commercial cinema in particular were nonetheless persistent. The film industry bore the brunt of the resulting attacks. As such, it developed a range of strategies to address its detractors. Some of these related directly to the production of particular kinds of films. Some are better understood as producing particular kinds of discourses shaping exhibition and reception. For instance, from the very beginning of cinema, the film industry sought to balance the populist and sensationalist pleasures upon which its fortunes depended with polite and proper fare designed to placate protesters—and increase revenue by expanding audience share. Within the more general rubric of classical Hollywood cinema, it actively courted middle-class patrons by producing and promoting literary adaptations,

biblical stories, or moralizing tracts about fidelity, honesty, and hard work. It also balanced this with controversial films about birth control, urban scandals, and thrill-seeking women action heroes. Yet, consistently, a key element of this work was to associate their films and activities with established cultural institutions.<sup>24</sup> In other words, Hollywood was also one of the most enduring and consistent promulgators of the idea that film could and should be not only educational but also considered an indispensable cultural and educational institution in its own right.

Among the many strategies adopted to accommodate this notion, the industry literature was littered with the assertion that films were good for everything from preventing crime to improving learning. Spokespeople frequently associated Hollywood with vague rhetorical projects to make film educational, to improve cinema, or to make "better films." Throughout the second decade of the twentieth century, such associations appeared frequently in the industry press. Regular articles were published heralding the wonders of moving images as pedagogical panaceas. Film was likened both to respectable cultural forms and to the middle-class institutions formed around them. In 1913 Stephen Bush discussed film's utility to education in the industry magazine *Moving Picture World*: "If the university of today is a collection of good books, then it is likewise true that the university of tomorrow will be a collection of good motion pictures."<sup>25</sup> The struggle toward respectability was a battle to shape public perceptions. As such, success was never dependent only on films or the industry press. Journals, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, and later radio were all weapons in this fight. Through these media, both industry-friendly supporters and balanced film moderates advocated for the necessary and beneficial contributions of film to the university (or film-as-university), the library, and the school.<sup>26</sup> Such discourses only grew throughout the interwar period as film became a way by which such institutions might also maintain their own relevance and expand their mandates by responding to what was clearly an overwhelming interest in movies, their stories, and their stars.<sup>27</sup> The films identified as important included popular feature adaptations, narrative shorts, and informational and expository films. This vague rhetorical platform of improvement must also be understood as one purposefully geared toward finding new utility and markets for celluloid and projectors as much as for quelling the ire of those seeking to further regulate industry activities. Companies such as Edison, Eastman Kodak, and Pathé, among others, persistently lobbied to open these markets.

Throughout the 1920s and especially in the 1930s, regulatory politics took on a much more formalized and national status. Because films would

not enjoy First Amendment protections until 1951, the Supreme Court's 1915 decision to deem movies "business pure and simple" fortified the legal stage upon which state and local censors, as well as women's and religious groups, would continue to act, and by which the industry would be forced to protect itself. During this period, the film industry itself was becoming more organized and rationalized as a business enterprise. As a result, various associations emerged that served to advocate for the industry's interests, to manage its public face, and to coordinate its growing workforce: the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA, 1922), the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS, 1926), and the Society of Motion Picture Engineers (SMPE, 1916).<sup>28</sup> Such organizations, particularly the MPPDA, battled a mounting attack, launched by various civic and religious groups, against the industry's rapid ascent to American cultural and corporate power. Nonetheless, each association worked in somewhat different capacities to further the status of cinema in cultural and educational matters. AMPAS collaborated with area schools to develop film study in classrooms in 1929. In 1923, the SMPE donated artifacts to museums such as the Smithsonian for their collection and display; it also arranged public educational exhibits of film technology, handbills, posters, and personal memoirs of industry pioneers in 1930.<sup>29</sup> The MPPDA is best known during this period as the organization headed by Will Hays and responsible for adopting the industry's self-regulating Production Code, the first version of which was penned in 1927. The MPPDA worked particularly hard to productively associate itself with institutions of reputation and authority. It supported educational projects at Harvard Business School, the Fogg Art Museum, and the National Archives, as well as various national and international educational organizations throughout the 1920s.<sup>30</sup>

During the 1930s, Hollywood studios continued the work of associating their films with sites and symbols of cultural legitimacy. Mounting attacks required increasingly strict enforcement of the Production Code, judiciously revised in 1930. From 1933 onward, under the guidance of Joseph Breen, stricter adherence to the Code was used to stave off external control of industry operations by the federal government and to offset the increasingly organized voices of moral protest by groups such as the Legion of Decency, formed in 1934. The rising cries against the film industry's pervasive influence appeared not just in the eyes of would-be regulators but also on the pages of widely published literature bolstered by the authority of the social sciences. The Payne Fund Studies, while complex and sizable on the whole, were distilled and disseminated as inexpensive paperbacks that

functioned as warning bells to citizens concerned about the negative influence of Hollywood films on their children. A new class of media experts with university credentials and a range of expertise emerged, providing yet another challenge to film's power.<sup>31</sup> Industry spokespeople remained insistent and defiantly marketed select titles to schools, asserting that popular feature films were good for learning and healthy for young citizens. They sent direct-mail advertising to schoolteachers, an effort that began with and fed the success in 1934 of RKO's *Little Women*. Teachers became a regular aspect of marketing the rising number of classic literary adaptations and historical biographies that emerged during this period. Further, the names of Dante, Shakespeare, Dickens, and Tolstoy were used by industry spokespeople as transparent indices to industry goodwill in press releases and advertising campaigns. Hollywood cloaked its films in references to the Pulitzer Prize, Nobel laureates, and the Theater Guild, attempting to further promote its prized pictures to those for whom such designators would have meaning.<sup>32</sup> Working with the MPPDA, several national educational organizations successfully orchestrated an active film education and appreciation program throughout the middle and latter part of the 1930s. These were composed of abbreviated feature films and study guides, sent directly to schools throughout the United States, designed to facilitate discussions of ethics and character development in schools.<sup>33</sup>

Friendly to the industry but not synonymous with it, a range of groups argued that with the proper guidance, well-intentioned viewers could navigate a safe path through the dangers of popular film. Uninterested in effecting lasting changes to institutions of exhibition per se, these groups argued for frameworks of evaluation, the responsibilities of individual choice, and self-instruction. Institutions such as the National Board of Review, the National Education Association (NEA), the American Library Association (ALA), and even the Girl Scouts of America used magazines, newsletters, pamphlets, radio, and newspapers to actively advocate for discrimination in film viewing, issuing lists of films differentiated from the swell of commercial product for their quality or thematic appropriateness to good leisure. The battle to make films educational, useful, or even participatory, thus to enact particular ideas about films and audiences, was waged on many fronts and in particular material conditions, often in the absence of any direct control over film production or exhibition. Partly because there were few ways in which such groups might actually make, distribute, or exhibit films themselves, a range of discourses collectively indicate an ambitious project to transform film culture through paracinematic practices.<sup>34</sup> Joining the emergent generation of professional film critics and

scholars, then, was a popular proliferation of film lists, recommendations, rating systems, reviews, categories and genres, and discussion programs—separating good from bad, classics from junk, moral from immoral, amateur from professional. The industry was friendly to these projects, facilitating screenings for such groups, among them the National Council of Women, the American Legion, the National Council of Catholic Women, the Boy Scouts of America, the YMCA, and the American Civic Association, and thus making possible the production of their reviews and evaluations. A simple but telling indicator of this trend is the *Motion Picture Review Digest*, a weekly compilation of the lists devised from some forty-odd education and reform groups that reviewed and evaluated films in current release.<sup>35</sup> Throughout the 1920s and 1930s there was a widespread effort to classify, to differentiate, and to build distinct and authoritative frames through which film viewers would ideally enter in order to shape their encounter with films and their experience of cinema. Such efforts push the limits of the idea that film culture can be fully understood by invoking the metaphor of the mass or by analyzing the isolated and unchanging film text. Rather, they testify to the angst-ridden underbelly of these very persistent abstractions.

In the 1930s, the idea that specialized and educated film viewing should be an integral part of a broadly based cultural and publicly oriented politic was becoming a common element in a larger discursive and institutional shift. The movie theater's mannered and educated cousin formalized these long-standing impulses. MoMA's film salon thus combined the idea of specialized and purposeful film audiences with the methods of cultural institutions that preceded it. With its attempt to coarticulate film and respectability, the library appealed to the swell of middle-class organizations and also to Hollywood. MoMA also affirmed the interests of the specialized groups that were forming more intimately around questions of the specifically or essentially cinematic. Of course, there was frequent overlap among all of these organizations. The American industry aside, these groups were linked by the foundational assumptions that educated and engaged viewing entailed attention to film's unique expressive properties, required distinct institutions, and was an essential element of both participating in and defining the contours of public life.

One part of this transformation was a flurry of now-canonical texts in the history of film study that were being written and circulated throughout Europe and North America. Usually acknowledged for their proclamation that film was a unique art, these writings were informed by movements in other arts, as well as by international discussions about film

history, form, and function by Arnheim, Eisenstein, Epstein, Ramsaye, Rotha, and Vertov.<sup>36</sup> Other lesser-known writings were also important for brokering this shift. Early in the twentieth century, critics writing for American magazines such as *Harper's*, the *Nation*, and *Century* began to apologize for movies by extolling their educational value. During the 1920s and 1930s, this number grew to include a sizable range of mass-distributed magazines as well as little magazines. Publications as varied as the *New Republic*, the *Nation*, the *Dial*, and *Vanity Fair* began to review foreign films and advocate for specialized audiences. From the late teens forward, the black press not only pursued antiracist protest but also explored issues of aesthetic distinctiveness and artistry. Venues primarily committed to literature, the established visual arts, and theater began printing occasional articles on film. These include *Hound and Horn*, *Theatre Arts*, and *Arts and Decoration*.<sup>37</sup> Magazines and journals that were devoted exclusively to film but that had smaller readerships also emerged, including the important international publications that circulated throughout Europe and the United States such as *Close Up* (1927–33); *Film Art* (U.K., 1933–37); *Cinema Quarterly* (U.K., 1932–36 becoming *World Film News and Television Progress*); *Sight and Sound* (U.K., 1932 to present); and the *International Review of Educational Cinematography* (Italy, 1929–34). Also important were the *Film Spectator* (U.S., 1926–31); *Hollywood Spectator* (U.S., 1924–41); *Amateur Movie Makers* (U.S., 1926–54, in 1938 retitled *Movie Makers*); *Experimental Cinema* (U.S., 1930–34); *Filmfront* (U.S., 1934–35); and *Films* (U.S., 1939–41).<sup>38</sup> The journal *Educational Screen* (U.S., 1922–56) also published articles on the growing uses of cinema within schools, museums, and community contexts.<sup>39</sup> The politics of these journals differed greatly. From the dynamic modernism of *Close Up* to the do-it-yourself, community-minded approach of *Amateur Movie Makers*, ways of thinking about film had become considerably diversified within a small but ever-growing circle. Not simply deemed an art because of its quality literary or theatrical adaptations but explored for its own sake according to varied models for both art and cinema, film was part of a growing web of debates. This writing also constituted a persistent and mounting set of alternatives to Hollywood.

The fact that newspapers also began to publish regular film criticism punctuates the widespread and increasingly commonsense assumption of the interwar period that films not only were worthy of comment as political flashpoints but were part of an everyday way of thinking about current events. In daily and weekly papers such as the *New York Tribune*, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, the *Chicago Examiner*, and the *Chicago Daily*

*News*, film writing acquired more sophisticated and distinct contours. Discussion of film had shifted from technological oddity or social problem or even simple plot description to sustained commentary on the social experience of moviegoing, with occasional discussion of film narrative or style free from the distributor's promotional prose.<sup>40</sup> The trend grew quickly. In 1935, the *New York Times*, for instance, not only continued its regular criticism, reviews, and annual "Best of" lists but also established its own annual film critics awards, broadcast by radio on NBC. This increased body of film writing created a platform on which persistent issues in film culture were aired. With a public platform and critical mass, writers in magazines and newspapers became more coordinated in their attacks on the state of current cinema. They bemoaned the absence of old movies and the difficulty of seeing the precious few non-American films that appeared on commercial screens. Old films and foreign films were seen as appealing alternatives to unsatisfying, undistinguished, banal, or objectionable film programming. These writers occasionally lamented the visual sophistication lost in the clumsy transition to synchronized sound. They also frequently acknowledged a lost context of film production, one that was less burdened by a vertically integrated industry and the moral overtones of American regulatory debates. They imagined a freer exploration of aesthetics, themes, and engaged social commentary beyond the narrow confines that so constrained American cinema. The ideas about what cinema could and should be were not presented just as a set of prescriptives about what constituted a good movie or a bad one, though this obviously mattered. Attempts to define and shape the cultures of cinema during this period should also be understood as a set of social practices that included writing, arguing, and reading about films on a wide and public scale that was significant unto itself. To crib from Miriam Hansen, such writing and the debates thus enacted constitute a distinct element of cinema's "discursive horizon," an identifiable network of ideas and practices that indicate a reflexive "publicness" inherent to the medium.<sup>41</sup> MoMA's Film Library was one visible element deeply ensconced in this discursive horizon, fully participant in a growing public discussion about cinema.

The same year that the MoMA Film Library emerged, public sentiment against the industry was at its height.<sup>42</sup> The proliferation of film writing provided an increasingly dynamic tapestry of alternatives to the industry's commercial and self-regulated model. Specialized formations of film culture were continuing to emerge. In addition to the more familiar idea that films might be *made* outside of the commercial industry, there was a concomitant call to recognize films might be *watched* in conditions removed



from the confining imperatives of commercial theaters. The Film Library emerged seeking to blend, balance, and further inflect films with the institutional edicts of preceding cultural institutions. It sought to coordinate resources, circulate select films, and advocate for distinct modes of interpretation. As such, it fits neatly within the broad spectrum of other reform institutions attempting to make leisure productive by aligning it with middle-class ideals of proper behavior and civic betterment, redefining cinema away from the ostensibly lurid and toward the so-called learned. In one view, the Film Library would seem at first glance to answer happily the need for a polite, contained, and respectable form of engagement with cinema. It was funded by a powerful philanthropy, sanctioned by the persuasive middle class, supported (at least publicly) by the film industry, and actively solicited by social reform groups as well as other hegemonic institutions: universities, colleges, museums, and schools. By collecting, lending, and exhibiting films—especially popular American films—and by making such films and film-related resources available, the Film Library distinguished itself by inflecting old films with some of the most basic ideals of bourgeois cultural respectability. Through a sprawling series of national and international activities, ranging from active relations with the press to specialized film programs, it associated its films with the values of art, history, and education. Its program notes demonstrated general affinity for now-conventional formalist approaches to cinema's development. The library's films were shown not in commercial movie theaters but in the comparatively elite spaces of museums, universities, and civic organizations. Each of these disparate sites of film exhibition was coordinated by one authoritative institution of art. At its foundation, the Film Library enacted the well-worn assumption that leisure was a crucial site for engendering proper conduct, moral development, and studied contemplation, taking a popular cultural form and submitting it to rituals of serious attention, polite discussion, and tasteful, cosmopolitan encounters.

MoMA's project to make of cinema an ordered and respectable phenomenon was, nonetheless, far from moralizing in tone or coercive in politics like some of its contemporaries. Importantly, it also drew freely on the generative body of writing tasked with articulating cinema's specificities and film's wider relationship to political, social, and historical structures. While the Film Library staff's efforts were clearly guided by class-based assumptions, the ideological bent of their activities was much more complex than those of other reform-minded groups. Like the National Board of Review, which during this period similarly advocated for carving up the mass of cinema in favor of specialized or minority film cultures, the Film

Library argued *for* particular kinds of films rather than *against* commercial cinema.<sup>43</sup> Its sense of moral or polite cinema had as much to do with engendering a manner of watching as with prescribing what should be watched. Commensurate with this, the Film Library had a comparatively dynamic understanding of what might constitute noteworthy cinema. It programmed French crime serials, as well as tales of urban and moral decay such as *Underworld* (Josef von Sternberg, 1927), *Little Caesar* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1931), and *Greed* (Erich von Stroheim, 1924), a genre of cinema whose appearance on American screens had been seriously inhibited by the mounting regulatory climate. Sex, violence, crime, and explorations of moral and mental liminality deemed unacceptable within the constraints of commercial cinema found new life on its private screens.<sup>44</sup> It also provided a venue for experimental and abstract films. Further, MoMA's was an effort to produce spaces that were shaped but by no means determined by studied modes of watching. As such it also resonated with politically progressive and occasionally radical activities under way in the United States and Europe. It showed celebrated American films alongside the increasingly incendiary films of Germany and the Soviet Union. In short, perhaps the most significant of the Film Library's interventions was its attempt to extract individual films—American and foreign—from the commercial, corporate, and official regulatory restraints that limited their movement, their means of expression, and their influence, providing the privileges as well as the prescriptives of art institutions more generally. While it necessarily selected certain films over others, MoMA's Film Library emerged at the peak of regulatory fury, seeking to carve out a comparatively warm shelter for the growing number of films and modes of cinematic expression unavailable to American audiences.

By including films, MoMA also disrupted some of the more staid and conventional aspects of traditional cultural institutions, particularly museums. It did so by institutionalizing the relatively novel and modern assertion that in addition to paintings and sculpture, the material of everyday life—buildings, photographs, advertising, machine parts, moving images—constituted valuable sources of aesthetic, historical, and intellectual contemplation. By situating film within this institutional claim, it contributed directly and indirectly to a national, highly mediated, and modern dialogue on the means by which elite, middlebrow, populist, and industrial logics of film's value might convene at the sites of art. For instance, self-consciously artistic European films were programmed with select literary adaptations as well as bawdy populist fare. The paintings of Fernand Léger and Salvador Dalí were shown alongside their films.<sup>45</sup> The Film Library's activities

also reflected the larger museum's appetite for generating public attention through constant exposure in the ascendant mass media. The library's shows frequently changed; its press releases were daily and numerous; it actively courted controversy and flirted with consumer culture and popular fashions. Film was, in this sense, only one small part of a much larger museological shift.

In short, the project to transform cinema from its status as a passing and mass entertainment to an edifying and educational activity grew out of the impulse to arrest the seemingly endless circulation of ephemeral images, securing them in time and space, moving them away from the location of commercial cinema and relocating them (sometimes the same images and sometimes not) elsewhere as part of an imagined and physical strategy of stabilization. This was neither an ideologically benign nor a simple impulse. It was tied both to class-inflected projects to reform cinemagoers deemed ignorant or dangerous and to alternative models for cinema that sought to integrate movie watching with organized modes of cultural engagement that might be critical not just of industry but also of middlebrow and religious moralizing. This included protection from the rising forces seeking to regulate film content according to spiritual and other ostensibly moral dictates, as well as from the raucous frisson of popular movie houses. Making cinema serious and also respectable was a complex of cultural forces and institutional ideals, made all the more compelling by a diffuse and misbehaving audience.

#### FRAMING FILM ART

Contemporary debates in film and media studies must do more to address the ways in which modes of exhibition, shaped by emerging technologies, have long facilitated changes in the experience and cultural value of moving images. Recently, for instance, it has become clear that home theaters, video, and digital technologies have all affected the contours of film culture specifically and cultural life more generally. Audiences have been increasingly atomized and their experience of media fragmented by the time shifting allowed by the new dominance of home entertainment systems; simultaneously these same audiences have been more and more coordinated by the collusion of megatheaters, saturation releases, and the orchestration of worldwide film events through magazines, newspapers, and television. Cable has further splintered the taste cultures of cinema, offering movie classics, independent cinema, recent releases, art cinema, war films,

drive-in movies, and even horror films as identifiable genres of, or channels for, home entertainment. Film and the multimediated culture of which it is a part are clearly undergoing considerable changes. Yet there is nothing precisely new about the general fact of these shifts. A small but growing body of work in film and media history has demonstrated that conditions of exhibition and reception have been changing what cinema is and how it functions from the earliest days of the medium.<sup>46</sup>

Emerging technologies, institutions, and the discourses that shape them provide a series of overlapping phenomena that help us trace and understand these shifts. Computers, televisions, VCRs, cable, the home, the press, and the archive have all fundamentally redefined the parameters of how we can think about what cinema is. For the current twenty-something generation, movies are small, plastic, and usually digital. They are objects that sit on bookshelves, packaged in thin, shiny cases. Compact, digital, and user-friendly, movies are watched over and over, day or night, partially or in full, from favorite scene to favorite scene, or while sitting on a bus with a laptop. They are borrowed from friends, lent to teachers, and traded with other collectors. They are read about on Web sites and discussed in chat rooms. Movies are, in a sense, always happening. Home is the primary site for a vast range of micro-film cultures generated, in part, from sizable personal libraries. For a previous generation, movies were largely events you went out to, for which you planned, and at which you showed up on time. They were stories projected with light through celluloid on a big screen. Some scenes stood out over the years; others faded quickly from memory. Friday newspaper reviews influenced Saturday night selections. Above all, film was a social and public event. The movie theater was a site of gathering, annoyance, flamboyance, perhaps introspection, and surely pleasure. It was a place to hand yourself over to a professionalized apparatus of food vendors, programmers, and projectionists. For my colleagues, films are studied closely, painstakingly, analyzed scene by scene and sometimes frame by frame, often on video. Tapes accumulate on shelves with messy handwritten titles and typed guides to important clips or precious special programs aired on cable of hard-to-find films. Television and video have fundamentally changed our encounter with moving images. Or, more generally stated, the material and institutional conditions within which we encounter moving images have utterly transformed the mode in which we come to see, to know, to think about, and to write about cinema.

MoMA's Film Library is an important site for exploring such fundamental shifts, marking a significant change in the conditions under which films have been saved and seen. It also indicates a range of noteworthy in-

fluences on our most basic assumptions about what it means to watch moving images. Under the purview of the Film Library and similar organizations, films became the organizing principle of sustained, small, and identifiable audiences. Watching movies was unfettered by crowds or the imperatives of commerce. Movie theaters were redefined as self-operated and malleable spaces. Programming was differentiated by specific community interests, buttressed by erudition or aesthetic concerns, overtly politicized or self-consciously ritualized. These multiple yet specific articulations of cinema's viewing formations began to take clear national and international shape during this period. This book documents the conditions under which this cultural shift became possible and took specific form, irretrievably changing cinema's expanding discursive horizon beyond the limits of Hollywood classicism to include a distinct mode of exhibition and a manner of watching. It does this, partly, by examining the library and the discourses it promulgated, using them as indices to ongoing changes in the basic meanings of cinema (figure 1).

Long before digital, video, and televisual modes of image display, the encounter with movies was shaped by portable film projectors and other institutional infrastructures such as museums, libraries, and clubs. The Film Library is one such cultural phenomenon. It institutionalized a particular way of thinking about and talking about films. By using relatively new 16mm prints and projectors (along with a smaller number of 35mm prints and projectors) and the resources of the library, MoMA enacted a lasting viewing formation. Borrowing from museological ideals, films became more clearly defined objects. Separated from their prosaic contexts of production, distribution, and exhibition, they were collected, catalogued, placed discretely in cans, arranged on carefully labeled shelves next to others similarly processed. With such a shift, ongoing specialized art and repertory exhibition practices were fortified and spread. Films could be plucked from 1914 and shown in 1935. They could be projected in chronological or nonchronological order. They could be shown repeatedly, slowly, or with their motion ceased entirely. Or they might actually be projected at their original speed. They could be watched alone, in a small or large group, in a cramped viewing closet, or in a sizable auditorium. They could be systematically compared with other films. Importantly, MoMA institutionalized the dating of films as a standard practice of film collection, criticism, and exhibition. Iris Barry herself described this as, in fact, the practice of which she was most proud, likening its bestowal of dignity upon film to that accorded to novels, paintings, and fine wine.<sup>47</sup> At the heart of the act of endowing a film with a production date was a basic, now commonsense, as-



FIGURE 1. Iris Barry and John Abbott, ca. 1936 (publicity photo). Courtesy of the Department of Film and Media, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

sumption that the making of a film occurs at a particular point in history and that that moment carries forward a certain significance whose imprint bears on the future meanings of that film, now more an object than fleeting shadows, with an increased sense of its own endurance through historical time. In other words, MoMA provides a glimpse of one institutional site wherein films took an important turn away from the ephemeral existence of the amusement park, the urban spectacle, and the phantasmagoric arcade; they also became stored objects, more resistant to the temporal flows

of daily life, the commercial entertainment industry, and the play of populist spaces. Films became more intensely studied objects, lending themselves to detailed formal analysis in a way that previously had been impossible and submitting themselves to very different temporal and spatial assumptions about how best to understand the moving image, redefined as a discrete cinematic object (figure 2). Moreover, watching such films was explicitly and discursively linked to ideas about knowledge, art, education, history, and improving civic life. The Film Library provided the material and institutional site where these new configurations would take further shape and attain greater focus.

MoMA's project was not ideologically neutral, and its politics were not simple. The Film Library sought to extract a vast range of films from their original material conditions of production and their usual contexts of exhibition, turning them into objects—albeit complex objects—imbued with the authority of an elite modern art institution. At MoMA the mass and materialist ideas of Eisenstein could be viewed by an individual art appreciator, oblivious to the politics of Soviet filmmaking but thrilled by the evocative pathos of cinematic montage. At MoMA, Charlie Chaplin's antics were less about the absurdity and injustice of everyday life and more about the tramp's mastery of physical motion-in-time. At MoMA, Mae West was construed as an essentially cinematic personality rather than an antibourgeois rallying cry for the vindication of women's sexual pleasure. The meaning made of films changed. Further, with the Film Library, one did not (at least officially) go to the movies early to wrestle for a place in line or to survey the desirability of other attendees; one went to the cinema (at least officially) to be educated about films from other nations and other periods in history. One went to the cinema to read about the films and to consider their aesthetic or historical significance. In doing so, one was encouraged to sit quietly, and—most important—to think. Program notes, lectures, and group discussions helped to facilitate this atmosphere. Viewing films at the museum was supposed to be educational, imbued with aesthetic and historical value, and, sometimes, the exoticism or the edifying aspects of foreign cultures. Spectatorship was accompanied by rituals of art and erudition, which included explicit and implicit behavioral codes. Film watching was cloaked in the cultural authority of a cosmopolitan art museum with internationalist aspirations. Films that were once deemed ethnic were dubbed German, Soviet, or French. Shorts that were once thought of as filler were now landmarks in the economy of cinematic wit. Features that wreaked havoc among moral middle-class reformers became original, distinctly cin-

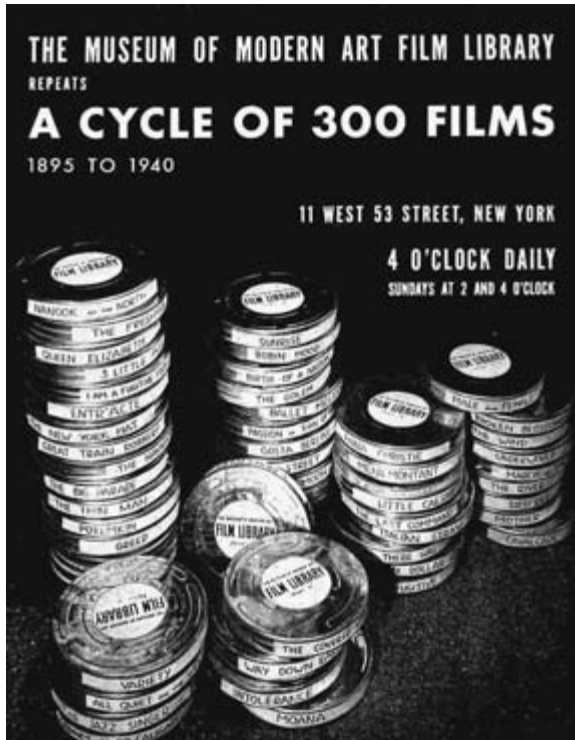


FIGURE 2. *Museum of Modern Art Film Library Bulletin*, 1941. Courtesy of the Department of Film and Media, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

ematic, and reflective of morals and mores past, and perhaps present. Laughter, yelping, whooping, shouts of encouragement to the characters on screen, barks of discouragement to fellow moviegoers, were often expressly forbidden. And, of course, attendance was to be timely. Films were to be watched from beginning to end. In short, the Film Library was articulating a new mode of film exhibition, one that was distinct both from the idea of what Tom Gunning has famously described as a “cinema of attractions” and from the enraptured spectator of classical Hollywood conventions.<sup>48</sup> MoMA articulated a cinema not of distraction, attraction, urban wandering, pleasure, or displeasure but, rather, one of studious attention—a notably distinct idea about what cinema was and why one would watch it.<sup>49</sup> This was not a form of spectatorship that was designed only around a



gaze controlled by the isolated film text itself but one that was interwoven with a whole set of behaviors and discourses that converged at the site of the screen and in the spaces of cinema.

Within the context of American film culture, MoMA can be seen as one part of a much larger transformation of cinema throughout this period. It fits within the long history of other projects, which in the face of a powerful and oligopolistic industry were forced to shape cinema less through *making* a particular kind of film, or influencing others to make a particular kind of film, and more through the politics of exhibition and interpretation. In short, self-appointed as arbiters of study, appreciation, and taste, Film Library staff sought to influence *how* people watched movies as much as *what* movies they watched. In so doing, they provided the means by which cinema might be co-articulated with an emergent cultural configuration that was embedded in clear and ongoing ideological conflicts over how to define cinema itself.

This book charts the overlapping material and discursive shifts that mark cinema's transformation from passing entertainment to an art museological object. It is rooted in an apparently simple question: Why was it that these curious, spectacular, erotic, contested, compelling, ephemeral images came to be thought of and treated as precious objects—collected, saved, and essential for building a historical record for the future? It provides, therefore, a survey of general cultural shifts, focusing on the first North American institution mandated with saving and showing film's unique participation in a wide range of phenomena: aesthetic, sociological, psychological, political, national, and international. It traces ideas and practices that underlie the relationship between saving, seeing, collecting, and exhibiting films. Concentrating on institutional discourses and highlighting broader intellectual and cultural trends, this book addresses film exhibition, in general, and MoMA's Film Library, in particular, as a reflection of and response to long-standing undercurrents in film culture that have imbued cinema with conflicts about cultural value, institutional authority, and public life. I argue that MoMA is both emblematic of such shifts and a central agent in their formation.

MoMA's Film Library, today known as the Department of Film and Media, has influenced generations of filmmakers, critics, and scholars. Although I will be dissecting the conditions of possibility undergirding the Film Library's earliest years, it is essential to note that its sixty-five-year contribution to film research, criticism, and to a lesser degree film style is immense. Through its films, its programming, its collection of books, pamphlets, journals, correspondence, clipping files, and other secondary materi-

als—and also its film stills collection—our understanding of film aesthetics, politics, and history has been inestimably shaped and enriched. Its curators, librarians, and archivists are all invaluable resources and full participants in a variety of film cultures. Filmmakers such as Martin Scorsese, Sydney Pollack, Jean-Luc Godard, Stanley Kubrick, and countless others have acknowledged the importance of watching films at MoMA for the development of their own craft. Film study programs and film societies at universities, museums, and libraries were literally made possible by MoMA's circulating programs and continue to be prominent if fading elements of film study programs today. Indeed, the first professional organization of film scholars, now called the Society for Cinema and Media Studies, then known as the Society of Cinematologists, grew out of annual meetings hosted by MoMA.<sup>50</sup> The film department is one of the longest-running art film exhibitors in the United States<sup>51</sup> and the first sustained North American film archive outside of explicitly commercial circuits, influencing the equally important institutions and archival projects that emerged at the same time or later: the National Archives, the Library of Congress, the George Eastman House, and the American Film Institute. It cofounded the first international consortium of film archives, the Federation Internationale des Archives du Film (FIAF), and sponsored the first comprehensive index to film literature.<sup>52</sup> It is an early and enduring publisher of film criticism and research. Countless books have been written using its resources.<sup>53</sup> It is a powerful purveyor of tastes and a shaper of the canon of films we call great. It has facilitated the emergence of the field of film studies and inestimably shaped the direction that study would take by providing the material infrastructure for the object-oriented analysis of a medium that previously had been experienced as an ephemeral cultural form. MoMA's Film Library is a crucial site for making sense of cinema.

The Film Library frequently has been identified as key to the history of film, most commonly because of its validation of film as an art.<sup>54</sup> There is a certain common sense in the field of film studies about MoMA's importance, one that has long escaped any thorough examination of the multiple forces shaping what it did and how it did it. To be sure, the relationship of film to ideas about art in general has an important history in film studies. There is a considerable body of literature that treats film's formal, institutional, and discursive ascendance to the status of the respectable arts as a sacred moment in the development of the medium and, by extension, of the discipline. Usually marked by especially accomplished auteurs (Griffith, Eisenstein, Hitchcock, Godard) or by particular innovations in film form (continuity editing, montage, deep focus, jump cuts),

the moment of “film art” has undergirded some of the most basic assumptions of our field. For instance, the most widely used introductory text book in film studies is entitled *Film Art*.<sup>55</sup> The idea of film’s formal specificity closely relates to the equally complex co-articulation of film as art. Both have shaped many theoretical debates, as well as historical overviews of the medium itself.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, elements of this narrative were well in place even before MoMA was founded. “Film art” has also been mobilized by an ideologically diverse range of interests, invoking very different assumptions about aesthetics, practice, and politics. Terms such as *foreign cinema*, *experimental film*, *avant-garde cinema*, *art cinema*, *modernist cinema*, and *classical Hollywood cinema* can all be considered sub-categories of the more general category of film art. Each refers to a very different configuration of what film art might be. A term might identify a film as art based on a particular mode of production, a national origin, or a specialized mode of exhibition. The idea of art cinema might be underpinned by formal principles based on modernist theories of disruption. It might describe a group of films, made and seen at a particular point in history, circumscribed by common formal features and points of origin (German expressionism, French New Wave). Some scholars have suggested that film art is best understood as a generic strategy designed to counter Hollywood’s reign or American international dominance.<sup>57</sup> Some people use the term to indicate films they like a lot.

In short, the terms *film* and *art* have been used with great elasticity throughout the history of cinema. Film’s status as a technological, industrial, and mass medium dependent on projection has lent a certain depth of character to its multiple definitions. In the United States, the phenomenon of film art is inevitably inflected with the same socioeconomic struggles and ethnocentrism that affect film culture generally. For years, categories such as art film and its close cousin the foreign film were used to name an extremely limited range of European films, with a brief nod to select Japanese and Indian directors. Clearly, not all films are equally foreign; not all foreign films are equally artistic. Some remain ethnic or international, while others are deigned masterpieces. Some are so foreign that they never reach American screens. This brief discussion can of course hardly begin to account for what art cinema means in non-American and non-Western contexts.<sup>58</sup>

In short, while the assertion that film is an art has demonstrated ample and necessary staying power, the basic meaning of the phrase has changed over time and among contexts, variably supported by a range of theoretical, institutional, and industrial projects. The most common approach to

the question of film art tends to be based on a film's content or its formal features. One of the problems with the film-centered approach to the question of film art is that it does little to help us understand the conditions under which such films came to our attention as art (or as foreign) in the first place; nor do such methodologies tend to signal the larger cultural politics of such films as objects made and seen somewhere at some time, participant in some cultural configurations and not others. This book continues the work of scholars committed to moving away from predominantly formalist or object-centered approaches to the question of what constitutes art cinema (or cinema in general) by refocusing on the material, institutional, and industrial factors that underpin this question. To invoke the term *art cinema* is to reference a complex of factors including not just the films themselves or their mode of production but also crucial interfaces that form the distribution, exhibition, and discursive contexts that mediate our encounter with films and constitute the apparatus of cinema.<sup>59</sup> This includes attention to film critics, museums and galleries, film societies, film festivals, universities, state organizations, and so on.

This book frames MoMA's film department as an institution of exhibition, one that was shaped by archival and museological structures. The period under investigation, while enacting early archival impulses as well as discourses, must primarily be understood as an archive-in-formation whose widest effects first registered in the field of film exhibition. I therefore seek to build on the assertions made by a range of scholars that film exhibition is an important category for thinking about the unfolding significance of cinema as a mediated cultural site, wherein contests of class, gender, and race are perpetually being played out. I seek to conjoin this basic insight with the recent work of those seeking to analyze the politics of leisure and moral reforms as elaborated through debates about cinema, museums, and urban life. Much of this work, implicitly or explicitly, presumes that the act of claiming that films are art or dangerous or edifying is a productive cultural moment, systematically forming the objects being discussed.<sup>60</sup> Such work is also shaped considerably by the debates that presuppose nonidealist approaches to the question of art and politics. I have borrowed from Pierre Bourdieu's basic assertion of the importance of identifying and mapping the relations among institutions, cultural forms, and material and symbolic power. The significance of art and culture can only be understood in a field of overlapping social relations; questions of cultural value are necessarily linked to material conditions of existence. These social relations are elaborated on an uneven playing field, with some authorized to enable and legitimate hierarchies of value and behavior while

others are not. Further, in making distinctions, in constructing categories of meaning and classificatory systems of order, we not only identify benign maps of cultural order but also produce value and hence create some types of objects and not others.<sup>61</sup>

The idea of film art requires analysis within the social systems that provide it solidity and sustenance. This project focuses on the mediators of film's value who themselves produced the very terms that legitimated particular films in concert with the authorization of their own activities. I depart, however, from Bourdieu's sociological survey methods and borrow more from the methods of cultural materialism.<sup>62</sup> I presume that art and culture, while tied to socioeconomic systems, are best understood dialectically and in their historical specificity. I am less concerned with what formal properties rightfully deserved sanction as film art in the 1930s. Rather, I examine the discursive and institutional transformations that resulted from the conflicting forces that converged and worked through one particular place. In focusing on the Film Library, I have tended to the conflicts over film's value both inside and outside the museum. Much of my evidence is drawn from materials that functioned as an interface between the brick-and-mortar institution and its public: program notes, film programs and related exhibitions, newspapers articles and press releases, popular magazines, film criticism, radio programs, and distribution catalogues. As such, considerable attention is paid to the methods and media by which the museum was reconceived as a series of mobile, constantly circulating texts, bringing its logics to millions of Americans every week. It is in these interfaces that one can witness the modes by which the institution crafted its public face, addressed its audience, and purposefully used other media to insert itself into ongoing dialogues and simultaneously further its own agenda. Such evidence also represents the most widely circulated pieces of the institution and thus indexes its most widely disseminated and influential ideas. When they have been available, I have used internal documents, memos, reports, and correspondence circulated among library staff, museum trustees, industry members, and grant officers, as well as other film organizations, to lend background and character to the internal dialogues that underpinned the library's public interventions. Overall, this project seeks to conjoin debates about regulating cinema with ideas about a changing film object—and to map the ways in which film study overlaps with both.

The analysis that follows focuses on the interwar period. Chapter 2 surveys practices of film appreciation and study as they formed through spe-

cialized and nontheatrical exhibition practices. Particular attention is paid to the importance of 16mm technology for constituting a new film network upon which MoMA's success depended. Chapter 3 examines the museum itself, addressing its early history as well as the specific factors that led to its incorporation of film. MoMA is considered an active site for the generation of ideas about art and museums, unique not just for its collection and display of modern and abstract art but also for its embrace of a new museology, integrated around mass-mediated systems and a renewed educational ethos that included everyday aesthetics. Chapters 4 and 5 deal specifically with the Film Library itself. The former examines the early debates in which the library was embroiled, considering closely the conflicting interests of the constituents to whom library staff were most beholden: museum trustees, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the film industry. The latter provides an overview and discussion of the exhibition and reception of the library's first film programs, tending to how these films were presented, where they circulated, and how they were received.

This study ends roughly in 1939, a point by which the Film Library had attained recognizable status inside and outside of the museum. During the war years, the Film Library was involved in dramatically different kinds of activities, taking government contracts, reviewing seized propaganda, opening its resources to Hollywood filmmakers working for the military and sponsoring European refugees under the guise of film research projects. These and the many other Film Library activities that followed provide the seeds for a much different but no less important inquiry. The present project concentrates on the library's formative years in order to exhume its early history and to consider the institution-information, a period during which it had to fight especially hard to gain acceptance. The discourses generated by the library during these early years provide crucial insights into the ways in which its project was conceived and legitimated. This book thus also sheds light on the various interests that came to bear on the process of constructing historical discourses through film and the library. What follows elucidates the conditions in which a film library in a museum became a plausible, sustained, yet highly negotiated project. It shows that what was eventually a powerful force in film culture began as an uncertain and compromised project, emerging at a time when ideas about both film and museums were undergoing considerable changes.

This book also demonstrates that despite the library's institutional home within a museum of art, film's museological value was associated less

with an art that had been neglected and more with a history that had been lost. The complex concept of film's historical value became the stage upon which film's status as a museum object was negotiated; film art became a broad rhetorical category, changing considerably across and within different contexts. During—and sometimes despite—deliberations on film's value, resources were gathered and a film collection was built.

MoMA's film project was not successful simply by virtue of its claims to film's importance as art or as history but also because it fed a complex and emergent network of ideas, practices, and technologies that coalesced during this period around the idea that under carefully designed circumstances films could be studied, discussed, appreciated, and made useful for a range of projects previously not linked explicitly to film. The integration of film into such infrastructures indicates that MoMA's film library was in turn also shaped by a set of ideas and practices in which film's value was reflected, configured, and reconfigured over time. Practices of film programming and exhibition transformed cinema to include the rituals and procedures of art and study.

MoMA's Film Library was the first North American institution dedicated to collecting, saving, and exhibiting films as unique emblems of a distinctly modern form. In doing so, it inflected old films with distinctly modern ideas, engendering discussions about the nature of film's value within the context of a media-savvy, publicly mandated art museum. The status of film at MoMA was further complicated by the wide range of practices that claimed to be or were considered film art, as well as by contemporary debates—spurred by modernism and modernity—about the nature of what “art” was at all. Moreover, the very public and popular status of the film medium did not expedite film's or the Film Library's cozy acceptance by the privileged art world. Collecting and exhibiting a wide range of film types within an art museum in the 1930s, the project to make film a modern art did not readily interface with established assumptions about authoritative cultural institutions, ordained museological spaces, or transparently democratic projects.

The history of the Film Library, therefore, provides important insights into how particular institutions have shaped the ongoing debate about film's complex status as high art, popular art, mass art, and history, a tension endemic not only to the 1930s but to the cultures of cinema in general. In other words, the Film Library was an inchoate but charged site, deeply embedded in a cultural moment in which ideas about art, film, and museums had converged to form a novel, hybrid, and quintessentially modern institution, one that resonated with other institutional projects to make

film respectable or institutionally useful. In doing so, the material conditions in which films circulated changed, and the temporality of the film economy came to embody both the ephemeral nature of the moving image and the impulse to arrest that movement. In short, the Film Library contributed inestimably to the idea that films old and new are an inextricable part of the material and immaterial present.



## 2 Mannered Cinema / Mobile Theaters

*Film Exhibition, 16mm,  
and the New Audience Ideal*

In 1943, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer produced an issue of *Passing Parade*, a newsreel series hosted by John Nesbitt and distributed to MGM theaters to be exhibited before its feature films. Entitled *Forgotten Treasure*, the episode resulted from collaboration with MoMA's Film Library, established eight years earlier.<sup>1</sup> Acknowledging the invaluable contribution of film to the storehouse of human records, *Forgotten Treasure* documents and dramatizes the plight of film images. While doing so, it asserts the uniqueness of film as a precious record of human activity and thereby implores that these decaying pieces of human experience be saved, that they be rescued from what Walter Benjamin once termed "the dustbin of history." The film's authoritative voice-over laments that despite "nearly every great event in recent history" having been saved on celluloid, "most of the priceless films have been lost to us for all time." Speaking from the present but organized on a flash-forward and flashback narrative structure, the voice-over continues:

In New York City, however, the wide-awake Museum of Modern Art began one of the greatest salvage hunts of our time, a hunt to find and rescue what remains of this rare film. So that long years from now, our grandchildren can actually see some of the things that are already becoming memories to us, perhaps understand us better, and in the new and wonderful moving picture history classes, learn the triumphs and heartbreaks which you and I go through today.

Throughout, the film displays examples of this imperiled footage, which includes images of prominent political figures, natural disasters, and public ceremonies. The newsreel is punctuated periodically by a scene of young students sitting in film theaters—the proposed setting for teacherless classrooms of the future.

In an attempted gesture of prescience, the film looks forward to February 1999, depicting a more evolved consciousness, when all of history is recorded, preserved, transmitted, and understood by moving images alone. The voice-over concludes: "But whatever the future will hold for us, one thing at least is certain, that if we can preserve the film we have or even discover an indestructible film, in 1999 the boys and girls now unborn will see the crushing struggle of our lives in this day as the ancient history of theirs. Even this war will be to them just another lesson in history." Panning away from images of the Pearl Harbor bombing, an event just more than a year old, the final word is given over to the students of this utopian future. Four of them sit wide-eyed, ostensibly watching a now remote and distant history unfold before them. As the film ends, an intertitle and voice-over instruct them: "Walk out quietly." Before obeying, one precocious little learner exclaims: "Just think, they used to study out of books." Another denounces: "How primitive!" The crude, inferior book and its potential contribution to historical knowledge are deemed obsolete. A cinematic utopia has arrived, imbued with the high honor of common sense. A superior form of knowledge is created. National atrocity becomes a transparent and self-explanatory image, whole with the past in service of the as-yet-incomplete future. Celluloid provides a vessel for previously unknowable facts and unfathomable leagues of time.

Dystopian or utopian, *Forgotten Treasure* serves as a parable, emblematic of the rhetoric commonly attached to narratives about film's place in the expanding archive of human knowledge and, therefore, of the moral imperatives similarly enlisted to rescue such objects from imminent decay. Posterity, represented by the faces of virtuous schoolchildren, must be served. The harmonious relationship of an innocent future to a fully unreeled past is frequently promised. Utopia is unburdened by an impoverished, incomplete, imbalanced visual record, historical disagreement, or contested images; its hope rests simply and comfortably within the ostensibly progressive ideal of an utterly visual history, filled with pictures that transparently impart knowledge to eager and similarly transparent viewers. Learning the past is configured as a manifest meeting of mind and machine; knowledge is equated with sight. Yet, as powerful and perhaps familiar as these prognostications may be, *Forgotten Treasure* is undergirded by a more fundamental shift: the widespread institutionalization of select films and particular modes of film watching. In this case, MoMA's Film Library, Hollywood, and public education conjoined to call forth a new kind of cinema. Their collaboration is only one example of a gathering national distribution and exhibition system that effectively brokered the increasing

exhibition of commercial films in a range of authoritative cultural sites. Schools, museums, and universities began systematically showing Hollywood films—among other types of film—cloaked in the language of expanding knowledge and improving learning. Students were to sit quietly and learn.

The articulation of Hollywood films with the moral imperative of educating children (and adults) is an ideologically laden one, clearly implicated in ongoing attempts to make cinema a good cultural citizen. Yet, the world of *Forgotten Treasure* indexes one of the most efficacious methods by which such ideas took firm hold. More than affirming the benevolence of images and industries, the film also presents us with an idealized mode of exhibiting such images, replete with structured environs and manners of watching. Unsullied by a morally complex world—and discussion about that world—and buttressed by prescriptive behavioral directives, *Forgotten Treasure* offers us a context of exhibition and reception that is highly ordered and predictable, reassuring its own mass audience of film's surgical strike on American classrooms. Watching industry-sanctioned movies, the film claims, bolsters the success of American institutions, helping them to maintain the balance between civilization and madness, peace and war, good and evil. Crafting a viewing context distinct from the dangerous commercial movie theater, educators and film industry insiders alike actively conscripted movie watching into a national project to maintain rather than disrupt social order. Such projects serve to confirm that films and modes of exhibition—including studied modes of watching—have long participated in the work of such cultural institutions, harnessed to properly educate and render sufficiently obedient the mass of ostensibly uneducated subjects, young and old alike. Indeed, film education, film libraries, film archives, and film clubs have long been situated—though not exclusively—alongside similar moral imperatives pertaining to institutionalized behaviors and ideals: quiet, attentive, and eager audiences enlightened by the seemingly transparent apparatus of cinematic learning. The film industry, with its vast collection of films, has persistently hovered in the background.

Eight years before *Forgotten Treasure*, MoMA's Film Library was only one of many voices in 1930s America seeking to shape film culture through activities predicated on educationalist and civic discourses. In addition to projects to actually produce educational films, exhibition and reception were targeted throughout the period as crucial sites wherein cinema could be made educational whether through directed discussion of films in current release or more commonly by circulating old films, showing them in school auditoriums and classrooms reconceived as viewing laboratories. A

range of films—fiction and nonfiction, feature length and short—was being dramatically resituated. For its part, the Film Library institutionalized and effectively furthered such ideas by enacting a range of activities that included not just films such as *Forgotten Treasure* but also published pamphlets, books, radio shows, and public lectures; each of these was designed to complement its growing program of circulating films.

This chapter explores key changes in film exhibition that created the conditions for the shape and scope of the Film Library's first activities. It does so by concentrating on an emergent 16mm distribution and exhibition network, discussing the implications of this network for cultural formations predicated on education as well as those more explicitly committed to amateur, political, and artistic logics. This chapter shows that alongside the increasing standardization of exhibition under the reigns of Hollywood's rationalized oligopoly and its mass address have long existed a series of parallel activities that sought to differentiate that audience, to shape film viewing, and to infuse cinema with a civic purpose to educate and to edify. This was a widespread cultural shift, one that marked itself off from popular moviegoing and was participant in a range of cultural projects. Some were based on polite models of appreciation and industry-sanctioned exercises, some on community improvement. Still others were more directly engaged with using film and film watching to contest dominant cultural formations. This shift was achieved not simply through ways of talking or writing about cinema, or through particular kinds of films, but through institutions and technologies of distribution and exhibition. By integrating moving images into a broadly based assemblage of social organizations and cultural institutions, the meaning of watching movies was fundamentally transformed.

Film and cultural historians have only recently begun to focus seriously on film exhibition and reception as viable sites of inquiry. Much of this work has concentrated on commercial theaters, with occasional nods to specialized contexts such as art cinemas or educational films.<sup>2</sup> One of the most common frameworks used to break up this vast field of cultural practice is commonly designated by the terms *theatrical* and *nontheatrical exhibition*. The former indicates that, on the one hand, there are movie theaters, the majority of which are populist in spirit, linked to mass audiences, profit motives, and Hollywood corporate control. On the other hand, there is everywhere else that moving images appear. That this division has any meaning in contemporary films studies reflects—among other things—the success of Hollywood in restricting the definition of what precisely constitutes a movie theater and thus the act of going to a movie. There is a certain

common sense to it: movie theaters are large, darkened spaces where we sit and watch feature-length narrative films in silence. Movies are made to be shown in precisely these kinds of venues. Yet, in accepting this definition, we have also tended to understand most every other kind of exhibition as something qualitatively different and subordinate to convention. *Nontheatrical*, defined in the negative, has long been used to designate types of films and sometimes modes of distribution and exhibition of a lesser or marginal cultural status. In terms of films, it has named educational, instructional, industrial, amateur, and church films. As a mode of exhibition, the term tends to describe such locations as museums, schools, union halls, department stores, and sometimes homes. Yet even a quick glance at the vast technological infrastructure and the expansive film viewing practices that have long existed outside of the idealized model of commercial movie theaters announces irrevocably that the idea of nontheatrical exhibition is so broad as to border on being meaningless. For instance, a study issued by the U.S. Department of Commerce in 1933 reported that 190,000 nontheatrical projectors were in use, including "home sets."<sup>3</sup> When compared with the roughly 17,000 to 18,000 commercial movie theaters, this number provides a striking counterexample to the film circuit dominated by Hollywood, announcing a network of film distribution and exhibition that was potentially ten times larger. This simple dichotomy not only seriously flattens a vast and dynamic field of film practice outside of movie theaters but also tends to ignore the varied life of movie theaters themselves. Commercial cinemas have long been used by specialized groups composed of schoolchildren, film societies, university film classes, and corporate executives. These same viewing groups have also watched films in classrooms, basements, lecture halls, and boardrooms. Hollywood narrative features, educational shorts, industrial didactics, and European art films have long been viewed in each of these contexts and in a range of formats: 35mm, 16mm, 8mm film, and, more recently television, cable, laserdisc, VCR, and DVD. Whether the criterion is film type, exhibition context, technological system, or audience composition, we must develop more nuanced and productive terms to understand the fullness of film's social, cultural, and political life.

The recent proliferation of screens upon which we can now watch movies—from gargantuan Jumbotrons to the palms of our hands—has irrevocably liquidated the sanctity of the main-street marquee. Yet there can be no doubt that watching movies has long been dependent on a range of mechanisms and systems—projectors, lenses, electrical currents, film gauges, distribution routes, small and big screens—which challenged the

discrete movie theater and yielded an expansive horizon of screen-spectator encounters. Cinema is neither now nor has it ever been a singular exhibition technology or social space. This chapter presumes that the lines demarcating nontheatrical from theatrical have long been blurred. The terms are best understood as indicating the most general of tendencies in film history and culture. When employed here, they are used to suggest less a hierarchy of viewing experience or aesthetic purity and more the hold that commercial film interests have maintained in designating the center of moviegoing (commercial theaters) and the putative margins that grew up around it (watching movies outside of movie theaters). The elasticity of the terms must be acknowledged, even for a period in history before television, when projectors and white screens still constituted the primary encounter with moving images. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, film culture outside of commercial movie theaters was expanding exponentially. Brokered by an increasing number of films and a new standardized film gauge (16mm), self-operated projectors and specialized audiences became a recognizable part both of a cultural ideal and of widespread film practice.

#### MOVIE THEATERS: BIG AND SMALL

Theatrical admissions rose steadily throughout the 1920s. The industry increasingly consolidated its operations as America experienced a period of relative prosperity. Contemporaneous studies suggest that on average most of the population went to the movies at least once or twice a week during this decade; 85 million attended once a week. When accounting for repeat and frequent viewers, it was estimated that 40 million out of a total 130 million could be considered regulars, seeing movies in one or more of the 17,000 movie theaters throughout the country.<sup>4</sup> By the 1930s, Hollywood studios had become what Tino Balio has called a “modern business enterprise.” Reorganizing operations, absorbing the effects of the Great Depression, and facilitating the shift to synchronized sound, Hollywood maintained its position as the center of American film production and the dominant leisure industry. The whole of studio operations continued along a process of rationalization. Not only production but also distribution and exhibition were being more tightly managed and integrated. Despite declining attendance and financial restructuring required by the studios because of the Depression, by the middle of the 1930s, theatrical revenues quickly began another steady increase, supported by an estimated 88 million weekly viewers by 1936, according to *The Film Daily Yearbook*.<sup>5</sup> Fluc-

tuations notwithstanding, theatrical moviegoing was a basic element of American cultural life.

Contemporaneous trends in exhibition mirrored the growing consolidation and affluence of Hollywood, reflecting its ongoing attempts to imbue films and screens with cultural status. Built during the boom of the 1920s, picture palaces—while few when compared with the total number of theaters—were nonetheless the result of a strategy to infuse moviegoing with the prestige of middle and high cultural venues more often associated with theater and opera. These theaters incorporated the latest technologies and most stylish design concepts. Centrally located in large cities, they were opulent in decor and lavish in their comforts. A sharp response to the grand theaters of the legitimate stage, they also liberally borrowed the signs of their legitimacy: Wurlitzer organs, air-conditioning, vast lobbies, comfortable lounges, oil paintings and sculptures incorporating styles from distant times and places such as the Italian Renaissance, ancient Egypt, and China. Occasionally, these theaters enacted grand tributes to art deco. Self-consciously designed to foster a sense of exotic escape to faraway lands, they equally emphasized service. Some offered fully staffed nurseries and even a hospital.<sup>6</sup> The largest of these theaters, until the opening of Radio City Music Hall in 1933, the Roxy in New York City, held up to six thousand seats. Predominantly urban phenomena, the palaces were an effect of the growing vertical control of production, distribution, and exhibition by the Hollywood majors. Maintaining hold on flagship theaters, which themselves functioned as mastheads for the consolidating chains of movie theaters that were forming, allowed the industry majors to better control release schedules, attract the largest percentage of the audience, and skim the cream of the ticket-buying masses. Though the lavish services associated with the palaces diminished during the first half of the 1930s in response to declining ticket sales due to the Depression, the palaces served as symbolic statements of the wealth, prestige, and style the industry sought to associate with its first-run films, and with moviegoing more generally.<sup>7</sup>

Figures such as these tell us much about the ways in which moviegoing, a widespread activity, was inflected with particular kinds of values by the industry throughout this period. Prestige pictures and movie palaces, and the complementary role played by lesser and smaller movie theaters, illuminate prominent corporate strategies for shaping leisure and streamlining industry operations, thus producing very particular and identifiable modes by which a vast public was being addressed. Yet, parallel to this were other equally important though perhaps less visible shifts in the ways in which cinema's respectability was being shaped through practices of the-

atrical and nontheatrical exhibition. Some of these sought to exploit the margins of commercial enterprise, as a small collection of entrepreneurs eked out special-interest audiences, exhibiting old movies or films made outside of American production contexts. Other attempts to actually show movies used the logics of membership and affiliation to create diversified networks that provided alternative films and exchange models for watching movies.

Distinct from the broad appeal of the commercial cinema and closely related to the idea of specialized theatrical exhibition, little theaters or little cinemas began to form. By the late 1920s the problem of access to films of the past and to non-American fare leapt from the pages of newspaper and magazines, circumventing the disinterest of large commercial distributors. Such films discovered new life on the screens of small theaters springing up primarily in large urban areas such as New York City, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Cleveland, and Baltimore. As early as 1927, there were reportedly nineteen such movie houses, exhibiting old and new European, old American, amateur, experimental, and feature films.<sup>8</sup> Similar organizations had long existed for theatrical drama and, as such, provided an institutional model. The ideals of the little cinema were supported by a range of notable film critics, including Gilbert Seldes, Herman Weinberg, and others associated with such journals and newspapers as *Exceptional Photoplays*, the *National Board of Review Magazine*, *Motion Picture Classic*, the *New York Times*, *Theater Arts Monthly*, and *Movie Makers*.<sup>9</sup> In their earliest formulations, American little theaters were often discursively linked to concerns for the future health and vibrancy of cinema in general, and they were clearly inspired by European precedents in Paris, London, Berlin, and elsewhere. Advocates associated the idea of seeing revivals and unpopular or unprofitable domestic and foreign films with the importance of nurturing specialized, intelligent audiences. Some of these theaters devoted considerable resources to designing theatrical spaces that were set apart by their quaint or exclusive aesthetic, distinct from mainstream movie theaters. Little theaters were often self-consciously designed to foster a sense of intimacy and belonging rather than the ostensibly opposite feelings of alienation generated by the impersonal populist movie theater or even the opulent palace. Some offered upscale amenities such as card rooms, lounges, or program notes. Some displayed art on the walls. Watching movies in these establishments was explicitly linked to civil exchange and polite engagement.<sup>10</sup>

While the full exploration of the cinema's potential—as an expressive form and an engaged context—was deemed to be dependent on the growth



of little theaters, their advocates were not of a singular aesthetic or political persuasion. In New York City, for instance, some theaters such as the Cameo and the Acme programmed largely Soviet and socialist films in close affiliation with groups such as the Workers Film and Photo League (WFPL) and therefore operated as a general critique of dominant film form, content, and capitalist structures. Other theaters such as the Little Carnegie and the 55th Street Playhouse emphasized "photoplays of distinction" and "timeless masterpieces," billing their facilities as "salons of the cinema." They adopted the language of art appreciation and bourgeois refinement, demonstrating a concern for honing taste rather than critique. Regardless of ideological persuasion, all little cinemas struggled under the weight of obtaining films that were deemed worthy of their cinematic vision and simultaneously offered adequate box office appeal to cover the costs of their operations. Some designed subscription systems for members in the attempt to stabilize income and also to circumvent censorship laws, since this practice rendered them private clubs and hence exempted them from regulatory restrictions.<sup>11</sup> Little cinemas nonetheless faced financial difficulties. Among the many reasons, obtaining more profitable American films became especially difficult as their independent status left them unaffiliated with a major or minor distributor and therefore out of the distribution loop. In 1929, Roy W. Winton, editor of the most widely distributed magazine for amateurs, lamented that the great idea of little theaters was forced to endure not only unfriendly industry policy but also unwarranted attacks from trade members and critics; little cinemas were denied access to commercially viable American films and then were lampooned for showing movies nobody wanted to see.<sup>12</sup> He bemoaned the hypocrisy and seeming impossibility of circumventing dominant film practice. As a result, and by necessity, little theaters sought to overcome the oligopolistic distribution and exhibition practices of Hollywood less by competing directly with them and more by complementing their programming: they showed films in which established film businesses had no interest. The arrival of synchronized sound, a process that began in 1926 and was largely completed by 1932, spelled further trouble for these theaters. Audience demand for sound only made its prohibitive costs more troubling. Douglas Gomery notes that changes to import patterns and the economic pressures of the Depression combined to further delay the healthy spread of little cinemas until after the war.<sup>13</sup>

The growth of little theaters in the United States was accompanied by the expansion of similar theaters in European countries. It was also in part shaped by the spread of the closely related film society movement in Ger-

many, France, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere. From the early 1920s, small and often elite groups began gathering to watch, discuss, and debate select films. Richard Abel has determined that by 1925 or 1926 an identifiable network of critics, journals, cine club lectures, screenings, and specialized cinemas had been well established in Paris. The first of these cine clubs was Le Club des Amis du Septième Art (CASA), established in 1921 and run by Riccioto Canudo. Members took part in a series of lectures on the cinema as well as attending special film screenings. A dedicated theater, the Vieux Colombier, opened in 1924 and featured regular showings of avant-garde and repertory films.<sup>14</sup> Established by Jean Tedeso, the Vieux Colombier influenced societies that followed, notably the Film Society of London, founded in 1925. Film societies were also active in Germany beginning in 1924.<sup>15</sup>

In the United States, the film society idea was slower to form. While there is some suggestion that a film society existed as early as 1919 in Maryland, the first documented cine club in the United States was established in 1925 in New York. It was short-lived and transformed into a little theater within a year.<sup>16</sup> The better-known and more prominent examples of the film society idea are evidenced by the New York Film Society and the Film Forum, both of which were founded in early 1933 and based in New York. Less entrepreneurial than the little cinemas, these societies were nonprofit organizations composed of member cinephiles and were run on a subscription basis. Their mutual purpose was to show films in a private setting that could not be seen in commercial or little theaters whether because of disinterested commercial organizations or keenly interested censors. An introductory flyer to the New York Film Society read: "Beginning in January THE FILM SOCIETY will show its private membership on one Sunday evening a month (omitting July and August) motion pictures of excellence, not ordinarily to be seen in even the little playhouse, or forbidden for public performance by the censor, and revivals important to the history of the motion picture."<sup>17</sup>

Reported sponsors of the Film Society included some likely and unlikely coparticipants, including noteworthy literary, cultural, and industry figures such as Nelson Rockefeller, e. e. cummings, John Dos Passos, George Gershwin, Alfred A. Knopf, D. W. Griffith, and Lewis Mumford. Original directors of the organization included Iris Barry, Julien Levy, James Shelley Hamilton, Dwight MacDonald, Harry Alan Potamkin, and Lincoln Kirstein. Under the banner of this odd mix, the Film Society set out to show "the best productions of the past, present, and future, free of the restraints of commercialism and the censor."<sup>18</sup> The references to anti-

commercialism were symptomatic of a predictable high-cultural disdain for cinema's popular appeal, as well as resistance to its industrial-capitalist model for cultural production. Also important here is the attempt to circumvent the effects of censorship and the restraints of the industry's self-imposed production code, designed to stave off moralizing critics, whose voices were mounting as the societies were forming. Members of the Film Society sought an intellectually engaged cinema, which included a relatively expansive conception of acceptable content and form. To be sure, the diverse individuals involved in this organization brought with them equally varied interests. For instance, Potamkin and later MacDonald were well known for their opinionated and politicized film writing.<sup>19</sup> Nelson Rockefeller was known for his philanthropy and links to a vast oil fortune. Julien Levy ran a fledgling but important modern art gallery. The short-lived Film Society was less an indication of a pure class politic and more a formation around the material challenges of orchestrating a new genre of programming.

The Film Forum was an explicitly political endeavor run by left-wing playwright Sidney Howard and Tom Brandon, a founding member of the Workers Film and Photo League. The Film Forum was plainly leftist, relying on distribution sources that existed primarily to circulate workers' films from Germany, the Soviet Union, and England. In its founding statement the organization clearly rejected "social and artistic films" in favor of "human documents." Whereas the Film Society sought "pictures of excellence," the Film Forum was more concerned to show films that were true to human (workers') experience.<sup>20</sup> Despite the differences between the stated aims of these two groups, they shared interests in revivals and foreign films as well as a general anticensorship platform.<sup>21</sup> Ironically, in the end, the programs of the respective societies did not look much different from each other and largely reflected the growing disdain for contemporary commercial cinema. Both showed a wide selection of films, including Soviet features, early Disney animated shorts, and documentaries. The Film Forum did, however, exhibit workers' newsreels and several more Soviet films than did the Film Society.<sup>22</sup> Importantly, according to Tom Brandon, both groups were largely funded by middle-class audiences competing for a small pool of available films, further supporting the contention that non-commercial film exhibition of features and sought-after foreign films was inhibited by a dearth of resources: films were expensive and hard to find.<sup>23</sup>

Harry Alan Potamkin was particularly aware of the circularity inherent in this dilemma. In order to involve films in politically, socially, and aesthetically relevant debates, one needed access to resources that likely were

unavailable because of the very social and political inequities that required rectifying. It was clear to Potamkin that the film industry was symptomatic of the challenges presented by culture under capitalism. Nonetheless, Potamkin—a member of both the Film Forum and the Film Society—was optimistic about the potential of the two organizations to host challenging and lively discussion. He hoped they would come to resemble the cine clubs he had visited in Paris in which, he stated, film viewing was linked to active engagement with the nature of film and its place in the aesthetic, social, and political world. Potamkin was, however, concerned that the American counterparts to these clubs might simply become a manifestation of what he termed a “messianic cult” in which film is separated from all things aesthetic, on the one hand, and social, on the other: “The movie is not going to save the world and we are not going to save the movie, but we have certain functions to perform, and through the film club we may realize the conception of the movie, whether entertainment or instructional or educational, because it is a medium of propaganda and influence.”<sup>24</sup>

Potamkin was skeptical of both highly formal and transparently realist approaches to film—tendencies he saw as latent in these newly formed film societies.<sup>25</sup> For him, the film should be neither a ritualized, bourgeois revelation nor a transparent document of class injustice. Film form and function were, to him, still relatively unexplored; their impact required intense and critical attention. Potamkin’s criticisms of the societies were—at their foundation—comments about how the films shown were understood and integrated into the event of watching. What he most wanted was to create a space in which films were watched with a fullness of intellectual engagement and the frisson of unbridled debate. He expressed unmitigated disdain for routinized displays of refined enlightenment and for the formulaic critiques of fantasy, fiction, and beauty he saw emerging from Marxist film circles. According to Potamkin, movie watching should be a charged event and experience, integrated with knowledge of the other arts, politics, and the productive conflict of disagreement. Watching, for him, was never only about the eyes.

Unfortunately, little information remains about the activities of these groups. They were short-lived and did not leave behind significant documentation. Many of their members were already a part of, or would soon become key members of, the emerging critical, educational, and archival film communities. Some of them went on to show films in other venues and under different organizational schemas.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, Potamkin’s concerns suggest two developing strains of film practice, which roughly correspond to the development of ideas about film as art and film as political in-

tervention: the tendency to associate formal film matters with social privilege and to associate film's transparency and documentary abilities with the power to reveal and rectify social inequities. Despite a certain prescience, neither society survived longer than six months.

#### 16MM AND EXPANDED EXHIBITION

The film society movement grew exponentially over the years. One estimate suggests that by 1940 there were twenty-seven film societies. By 1948 there were eighty-four such organizations, and by 1955 there were an estimated three hundred. By the 1960s, this number had increased by more than 1300%, to approximately four thousand.<sup>27</sup> The growth of film societies is clearly part of a story about expanding practices of film art and film study at American universities, and about the elevated prestige of film as an aesthetically innovative mode of cultural expression capable of addressing controversial and complex social and political issues. A new wave of postwar films from Italy, France, and Japan were also a key part of this development. Yet the most crucial of all factors underpinning the spread of film societies were the availability of relatively inexpensive means of projection and an adequate supply of films. Some film societies made arrangements with local exhibitors to use theaters in dark periods. Still more relied upon the recently established international network of 16mm projectors, films, and small screens.

From the very beginning of the cinema, manufacturers marketed portable projectors and film gauges designed specifically for home and small-venue exhibition, seeking to expand the working definition of theatrical space as well as market share. Alongside the growth of the first theaters designed specifically for the exhibition of films, nontheatrical producers, distributors, and exhibitors provide a parallel history to the increasing regulation and standardization of theatrical moviegoing. Such equipment and films were made available through a variety of sources, including Sears catalogues, regional film libraries, industrial libraries associated with magnates such as Henry Ford, and civic organizations such as the YMCA (figure 3).<sup>28</sup> From the mid-1910s forward, films were exhibited, with varying degrees of success, on steamships, trains, planes and at tractor dealerships, beaches and resorts, prisons, military outposts, museums, diners, department stores, and churches. At least three dozen different technology systems were in use to service the domestic field alone, a number that more than tripled between the introduction of 16mm in 1923 and the introduc-

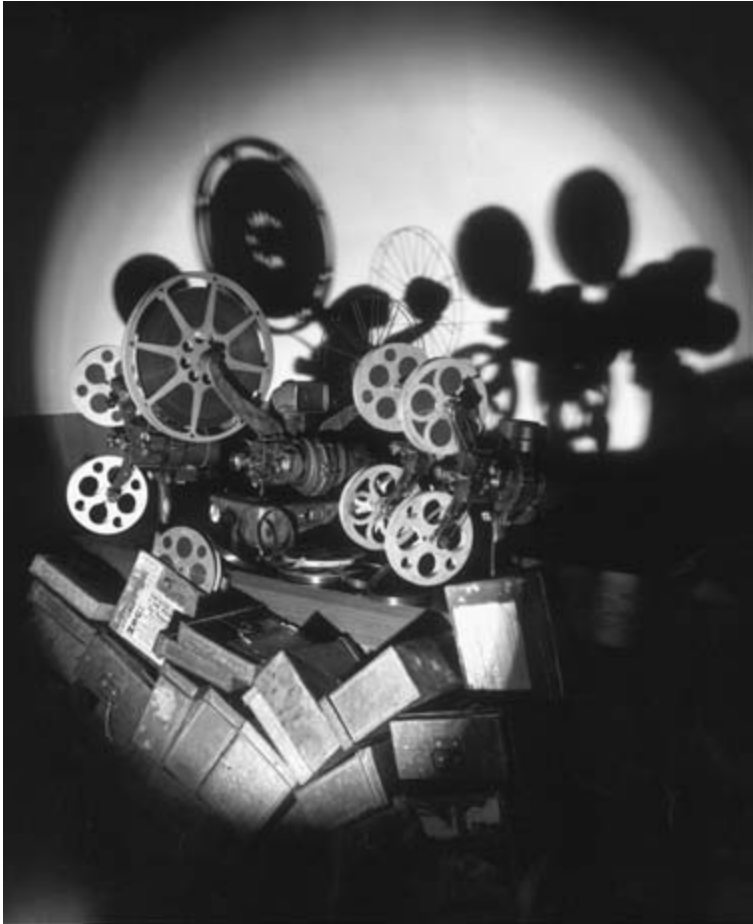


FIGURE 3. Department of Education, film room, 16mm projectors, film reels, and shipping containers, American Museum of Natural History, 1937. Courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History Library.

tion of television in the late 1940s and early 1950s.<sup>29</sup> In short, moving picture exhibition outside of movie theaters increased considerably throughout the late 1910s and grew consistently from the 1920s. A majority of these circuits were designed solely to facilitate exhibition; some were linked to alternative modes of production. Such use of moving images provides early indicators of, among other things, the trend toward the increased presence of moving images and screens within institutional mandates and everyday spaces.

During this early period, 16mm technology constituted a formative infrastructure for the proliferation of images and screens. The designation 16mm refers literally to the width of the film gauge, yet it was more accurately an expansive network of ideas and practices, supported by an amalgam of cameras, projectors, and film stock. The technology of 16mm was brought together by industry agreements established between Bell and Howell, Victor Animatograph, and Eastman Kodak.<sup>30</sup> Announced in the *New York Times* on July 15, 1923, the new consortium was an aggressive move to dominate other non-35mm formats. Kodak's complete 16mm outfit included the Ciné-Kodak camera, the Kodascope projector, and safety-reversal (nonflammable acetate) stock. As a technology of production, the system relied on a reversal processing system, which used the original stock to create a final positive, projector-ready print. This eliminated the costly need for a negative, reducing the total amount of stock needed to make any one film. While this initially worked against the reproducibility of 16mm productions, because only one print could be readily made, it also reduced costs of material and mailing, primarily benefiting would-be filmmakers uninterested in widely distributing their films.<sup>31</sup> The Kodascope projector soon offered other benefits to would-be audiences as an increasing supply of compatible films could handily be projected and viewed at lower cost than Pathé's 28mm format and at competitive cost with Pathé's recently introduced 9.5mm standard (1922). Kodak targeted both amateur filmmakers and nontheatrical exhibitors, advertising their projectors in business, education, and amateur publications, and even in the ubiquitous women's magazines ascendant during the decade.<sup>32</sup> The lighter weight and increased manageability of these projectors and films also further ensured that exhibiting films could be orchestrated easily by one minimally trained projectionist capable of transporting and mounting film reels without assistance. No exceptional space needed to be dedicated to housing exhibition equipment—sizable nitrate reels, large projectors, fireproof booths—such as were common for 35mm projection in auditoriums and lecture halls. With 16mm, one projector could be moved simply from classroom to classroom or from living room to closet. With a self-operated machine, images could be shown readily to a range of audiences in limitless locations, in turn relieving audiences of traveling long distances to a movie theater showing an industry-scheduled film. Use of 16mm not only ensured the long-standing if sporadic practices of exhibition in schools, museums, libraries, and homes that were not initially designed or equipped to facilitate film projection but also increased the feasibility of an extant labor force

largely composed of women using these machines in a cost-efficient and possibly labor-efficient manner.

As with Kodak's main competition, Pathé's Pathéscope 28mm and Pathé Baby 9.5mm, its use of acetate was a purposeful attempt both to assuage the fear of film's dangerous flammability and to render film safe for a range of settings. Since 1917, all films could be sent by the postal service, eliminating the necessity of private transportation services. Acetate film made shipping by mail even less costly because acetate, unlike nitrate film, did not require heavy packaging in lead-lined cases.<sup>33</sup> Films were smaller and easier to handle, as was the projector used to exhibit them. Buttressed by these changing conditions and a rapidly growing supply of films, the 16mm Ciné-Kodak system found immediate success.<sup>34</sup> Within months, Victor Animatograph and Bell and Howell introduced their own 16mm camera and projector systems.<sup>35</sup> All three systems used Kodak's safety-reversal stock. In the years immediately following 16mm's foundation, each of these companies introduced new, improved equipment. As early as 1927 other companies entered the growing 16mm fray.<sup>36</sup> The year 1929 saw the coupling of Victor Animatograph and RCA to produce the first sound-on-film 16mm projector. The key to securing this expanding market after Hollywood's shift to sound was Victor's invention of a continuous sound reduction printer in 1933. With it, the means by which an extant store of 35mm sound prints could be efficiently converted to 16mm sound stock was established. Initially, organizing a secondary market for film exhibition interested Hollywood less than it did technology companies like Bell and Howell and Eastman Kodak, largely because this was primarily conceived as a way to increase sales of projectors and film stock.<sup>37</sup> On the whole, studios entered the field with caution, releasing only films that had long expended their theatrical profitability. In other words, the early corporate organization of this field suggests that it was largely driven by technology rather than by content. Companies such as Eastman Kodak—ever interested in new uses for its celluloid—approached Hollywood studios, seeking to secure the rights to reduce and distribute old, noncirculating films from their 35mm vaults. They needed content to stimulate demand for their projectors and to increase sales of film stock. Of course, content would change across the specialized audiences they sought to create and transform into a market.

The significance of small-gauge projection formats is clearer in the context of the specifics of 35mm and its status as the standard professional gauge for commercial exhibition, established as early as the second decade



of the cinema. Fortifying the gauge as the professional standard provided a powerful barrier to entering the film business, in part, by professionalizing production and exhibition, thereby requiring considerable resources to compete with established enterprises. Patents and high licensing fees, as well as building and fire codes, were key manifestations of this situation.<sup>38</sup> As already mentioned, theatrical exhibition was becoming more tightly linked to the industry's rationalization and vertical integration. On the one hand, 16mm exhibition is a method by which technology companies such as Kodak sought to expand their markets in areas not already effectively controlled by Hollywood. On the other hand, 16mm must also be seen as a means by which smaller and specialized groups attempted to redress the increasing corporate control of film form and practice by both making but more often by exhibiting films. Such films might demonstrate affinity with preferred religious, educational, moral, or political lessons, or they might provide an outlet for experimental films or for Hollywood or foreign titles that were deemed dangerous or prohibitively expensive or were simply unavailable in 35mm.

In the early stages of this developing field, the cost of projectors was high, thus restricting market growth. Sixteen-millimeter sound projectors, which were designed almost as soon as theaters began wiring for sound, presented an added expense. Prices gradually came down for older silent models, though they rose again with the introduction of new, improved sound and variable lenses and degrees of illumination.<sup>39</sup> Yet, on the whole, prices for projectors slowly fell and the high cost of film purchase and rental rose to the fore. Commercial film libraries scrambled to make their holdings affordable by offering a variety of rental and membership schemes rather than outright sale of films.<sup>40</sup> By 1930, three systems were in place for securing films in addition to outright purchase: (1) annual subscription methods that entitled the renter to a specified number of titles each year; (2) the temporary hire of groups of films for single performances over an agreed-upon time; and (3) film exchanges that functioned as swaps, where films could be traded among owners, offsetting the expense of rentals.<sup>41</sup>

From early on, there is evidence that amateur film production grew with the new 16mm standard. In 1927, it was estimated by enthusiasts that thirty thousand amateur filmmakers were busy in the United States alone.<sup>42</sup> By 1937, Philip Sterling speculated that one hundred thousand home moviemakers were active in the United States.<sup>43</sup> Companion to this, Sterling similarly hypothesized that "through one of 500 sources, at an average rental of \$1 a reel, one can rent anything from an out-dated

Mickey Mouse to a microphotographic study of *The Life Cycle of the Oyster*.”<sup>44</sup>

Throughout this period film libraries geared to facilitate film rental and exhibition proliferated, feeding public imagination. In 1925, Kodak initiated the first international 16mm library service, Kodascope Libraries, which made use of Kodak’s preexisting distribution and retail network built to market its photographic products. Films were available in camera shops but also in drug and department stores, as well as stand-alone rental outposts.<sup>45</sup> By 1928, there were reportedly twenty-two rental libraries offering a mix of national and local services. While this number may seem insignificant, it demonstrates that entrepreneurs and other business interests foresaw the beginnings of a sustainable technological infrastructure and that steady demand was creating a potentially lucrative market. Other contemporaneous studies provide conflicting but nonetheless impressive figures documenting the spread of 16mm projectors, fed by a commensurate growth in film libraries.<sup>46</sup>

Despite the practical problems of supplying desirable films to customers and the setbacks caused by the Depression, the number of 16mm projectors continued to expand, giving way to a sense of the abundant images allowed by this new network. The gradual electrification of homes, schools, and other public sites made the automatic projection offered by 16mm more widely possible and thus appealing. The practice and the idea of portable projection had taken hold, attracting professional and amateur alike. While increased mobility and decreased costs chipped away at previous material barriers to widespread nontheatrical film exhibition, the idea of mobility and versatility of cameras and projectors had crushed the imaginative barriers. This led some commentators to imbue 16mm with a utopian chorus, crafting 16mm as a whole new way of thinking, seeing, and being in the world.

#### INDUSTRIOUS EDUCATION: SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES

In 1915, Vachel Lindsay predicted: “The motion pictures will be in the public schools to stay. Textbooks in geography, history, zoology, botany, physiology, and other sciences will be illustrated by standardized films. Along with these changes, there will be available at certain centers collections of films equivalent to the Standard Dictionary and the Encyclopedia Britannica. . . . Photoplay libraries are inevitable, as active if not as multitudinous

as the book-circulating libraries."<sup>47</sup> General discussions of film's educational utility date back to the first decade of the film industry. Ben Singer has documented some of the industry's early efforts to advocate for the use of films in schools, noting that there were film projectors in select schools from as early as 1910.<sup>48</sup> Thomas Edison himself lobbied for the use of film in schools, contending that films in the classroom would eliminate the need for costly textbooks. Edison further suggested that the government organize a film library that would facilitate this revolution in education.<sup>49</sup> Yet, it was not until the introduction of 16mm that the film industries began to make considerable inroads into the school market. H. A. DeVry, head of the DeVry Corporation, established a summer school of visual education for teachers in 1925.<sup>50</sup> George Eastman urged the use of films in classrooms from 1923, lobbying the National Education Association to sponsor their production. In March 1926, he called a meeting of prominent educators after which Eastman notified Will Hays, then head of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association, of his intentions to begin an experiment to make educational films. The announcement was made boldly, and the project was backed by considerable capital investment.<sup>51</sup> Partly because research indicated that one of the key barriers to using films in schools was that many school boards simply could not afford such investments, in 1927 Eastman provided select school systems across the country with 16mm projectors and films. It was estimated that ten thousand students participated in the experiment.<sup>52</sup> Eastman was not alone in his attempt to nurture and exploit the educational market. Pathé also funded such research, issuing educational catalogues at least as early as 1929. The history of film in education should clearly be viewed critically; the use of films in this setting had as much to do with well-meaning pedagogues as with industry pundits eager for film stock and equipment sales. Education by technology and other means has long been intimately bound to profits.<sup>53</sup>

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Hollywood continued implicating itself in the discourses associated with the learning and good citizenship implied by schools and libraries. The MPPDA persisted in publishing short pieces in library journals and other venues that predictably advocated for the importance of film adaptations of genres such as literary classics, asserting that they helped call attention to the basic appeal of reading books. Film would aid libraries in their mission to "make ignorance not only uncommon but impossible."<sup>54</sup> Perhaps more direct and influential were the MPPDA's collaborations with national educational organizations through which programs emerged that institutionalized both talking about

and watching films in classrooms. Like Eastman, Will Hays also nurtured relations with the NEA. In 1922, the year of its founding, the MPPDA financed the work of a committee that identified theatrical films that might be suitable for adaptation to school use. In 1929, the MPPDA held a conference attended by several hundred college presidents and educators, in which involvement in similar educational programs was solicited and procured.<sup>55</sup>

The educational use of film continued to be a growing concern throughout the 1930s, as not only museums and civic groups but also schools themselves began to collect and distribute films to facilitate interschool exchange. Film circuits and film cooperatives were established to offset costs and facilitate distribution. As with many educational technology projects, private interests were prominent. Schools were a widening market for a growing educational film industry. Anthony Slide has noted that in the 1930s, schools were supplied by an estimated 350 producers and distributors of educational, documentary, industrial, religious, and foreign films.<sup>56</sup>

This expanded film audience continued to attract the interest not only of Hays but also of individual studios. In 1929, Universal established a nontheatrical department, in part, to feed schools but also the expanding domestic market. Its films provided the backbone of Show-at-Home Movie Library, Inc., based in New York (1927). In 1931, Columbia also opened a nontheatrical division. Fox established an educational department the same year, circulating the Movietone School Series. Throughout this period, the MPPDA continued its work with several national educational organizations to oversee the classroom use of studio films, whether as features or as clips. These efforts culminated in the increased use of Hollywood films specifically, and educational films generally, in classrooms throughout the 1930s. The MPPDA struck a committee in 1936 that continued to pursue placing theatrical films in classrooms under the aegis of the Educational Services Department.<sup>57</sup> Shortly thereafter, the Hays Office announced that it intended to cooperate with a "group of distinguished educators on a plan for organizing the production and distribution of educational films" for the 16mm school circuit, estimated to have 278,000 distinct sites.<sup>58</sup> Educators were invited to consider ways in which Hollywood features might be made useful: printed study guides, abridged versions to accommodate class schedules, single-scene clips in anthology format. Hollywood initiatives continued. By 1948, Loew's International, MGM, RKO Pictures, Paramount Pictures, and Universal Pictures Company had established either wholly owned subsidiaries or full-fledged departments dedicated to non-theatrical distribution or educational film production. Twentieth Century-

Fox, Columbia Pictures, and Warner Bros. announced further investigations into the field.<sup>59</sup>

The interest of the film industry in classrooms was also a response to changes in the field of education itself. The 1920s and 1930s hosted an increasing number of associations born separate from the film industry, and specifically interested in education, that began to integrate the use of films into their activities. A number of universities established audiovisual lending libraries or specialized collections: Yale, Princeton, Minnesota, Ohio, Chicago, Harvard, Syracuse, and many others.<sup>60</sup> Individual states as well as national organizations such as the previously mentioned NEA (1922), the National Congress of Parents and Teachers (1924), the American Council on Education (1934), and the Progressive Education Association (1935) established audiovisual or film committees or otherwise incorporated film into their activities. In 1931, the National Council of Teachers of English had already established a committee specifically devoted to "photoplay appreciation." Philanthropies began investing money and supporting projects to put films in schools and libraries. Among many such projects was the formation of the Association of School Film Libraries (1937), funded by the Rockefeller Foundation's General Education Board.<sup>61</sup> Contemporaneous reports suggest that school spending on all forms of visual education more than doubled between 1922 and 1931. Universities with bureaus of visual instruction invested \$1.6 million during the same period.<sup>62</sup>

The exhibition and study of film in universities have a somewhat different lineage than the study of film in primary and secondary schools. This is the case in part because universities were not burdened with the moral complexities of educating young and impressionable children in a polyglot public school system but were tasked with engaging adults young and old in the more specific challenges of becoming either specially trained workers or fully developed whole, if privileged, participants in contemporary life. American universities were adapting from sites of gentlemanly refinement to institutions weighted with the necessary task of addressing the utility of the academy to the industrial and urban contexts in which people lived. The result was a shift toward education reconceived as practical and popular and not necessarily the purview of a small elite. The swell of immigrant populations, particularly in cities such as New York, thus corresponded to increased immigrant enrollment in educational programs and a proliferation of extension programs (night classes, distance learning, adult education). As universities changed, so too did the film industry. During the 1910s and 1920s, their production methods became more systematized, their products more formulaic: the feature film became the industry stan-

dard. The various stages of a film's production became increasingly Taylorized, more akin to a highly rationalized assembly line. The little town of Hollywood grew into a world power. The voracious industry required trained writers, technicians, and camerapersons, skilled not just in a cinematographic imagination but also in the conventions and routines commensurate with standardized production methods.<sup>63</sup>

The first university film courses were direct products of shifting industry needs combined with the university's changing mission. Teaching screenwriting and technical skills accompanied the development of curriculum that fostered interpretive and analytic skills. Such courses linked the professional stream of universities, particularly their extension programs, with the Great Books programs, which tended to be part of general education mandates in traditional universities. Dana Polan suggests three primary ways in which film entered American universities during the second and third decades of the twentieth century. Each provides a parallel for the better-known publication of canonical film texts: as an element in Great Books-type programs (film was an art equivalent to other arts) (Lindsay, Arnheim); as unparalleled purveyor of knowledge and universal language (Van Zile, Lindsay); as craft (the product of skilled work that functioned first as a method toward self-improvement and later as industry utility) (Patterson and Freeburg).<sup>64</sup> Some of these courses were general and included brief attention to all or several of these approaches; others were more narrowly dedicated to one or the other. But it was not just in the marginal or utilitarian and nondegree programs in which film study was being considered a worthy element of the university curriculum. Polan suggests that there was greater openness to studying film throughout this period than has been previously understood. Proponents of Great Books programs, administrators of education programs (for adults and children), as well as trade schools began to address the question of teaching film production, aesthetics, and history. Such courses can be found in a range of departments, including extension programs, departments of general education, psychology, theater, and fine arts programs, and foreign language departments.<sup>65</sup>

Efforts of the rationalizing industry to create worker-training programs can be seen as early as 1915, as Columbia began to teach screenwriting courses under the guidance of Victor Freeburg and Frances Patterson, in collaboration with Adolph Zukor and Jesse Lasky, whose two companies merged in 1916 to become Famous Players-Lasky. In part to generate incentives and effective methods of recruitment, they sponsored "Best Script" contests, promising to produce select scripts developed from

these courses. Throughout the late 1920s and 1930s, both the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and the MPPDA actively corresponded with universities such as Columbia, Harvard, Stanford, and the University of Southern California (USC) about setting up film courses.<sup>66</sup> Other schools worked in tandem with groups operating outside of the industry in order to generate resources—material and intellectual. Frederic Thrasher taught in the School of Education, New York University (NYU), and worked in conjunction with the National Board of Review. Film courses and screenings listed in the course catalogues at the New School for Social Research were linked to the Workers Film and Photo League and to Harry Potamkin, Jay Leyda, Irving Lerner, and also to film critics such as Stanley Kaufman.<sup>67</sup> Just before his death, Potamkin announced the formation of the league's own film school.<sup>68</sup> Many of these courses demonstrate a surprising catholicity in their approach to what constituted the study of cinema, indicative of a field still very much in gestation. Thrasher's course at NYU serves as a case in point. His syllabus contained a range of topics, including newsreels, experimental films, feature films, history, auteur studies (then known as "author" studies), "morals and movies," censorship, motion picture art, exhibition, motion pictures and psychiatry, medical and clinical films, the religious film, and community and personal use of motion pictures.<sup>69</sup> Each week would effectively be taught by an expert in the field, assembled from educational institutions, the industry, or even hobbyists.<sup>70</sup> The study of film had not yet hardened within now-familiar disciplinary structures; it had not yet been clearly defined as the study of a fine art or a mass medium or a popular entertainment. Indeed, it was all of these at once.

The course at USC deserves special mention because it involves the activities of AMPAS, another important industry association during these years. Conceived as a supplement to the activities of MPPDA and formed at what is generally understood to be the peak of the silent era and the beginning of the transition to sound film, AMPAS announced its goals: to harmonize internal and external industry relations and to generally advance the status of motion pictures in America. Membership in AMPAS was invitational and honorary, encompassing five distinct groups: producers, directors, actors, writers, and technicians. The organization's functions grew to include the well-known awards program, as well as educational programs, a library for members, several failed attempts at launching a magazine, and collaborations with educational institutions to foster film study. AMPAS also held screenings for its members, specifically naming the best European films, experimental films, educational and science films, as well as

unprofitable but interesting American films as pertinent to its educational mission.<sup>71</sup>

In its first year, AMPAS established a College Affairs Committee (CAC), which included Milton Sills and Cecil B. DeMille, both of whom gave lectures at the conference at Harvard in March 1927, organized by Joe Kennedy. The CAC worked with USC explicitly to develop courses to help prepare students for work in the industry. This culminated in the 1929 course Introduction to the Photoplay, as well as the publication of its mimeographed lectures to allow other colleges to offer the same class. These publications were used to launch courses at Stanford, the University of Iowa, and UCLA.<sup>72</sup> There were plans to publish these lectures as books and as sound-film lectures, though neither materialized.<sup>73</sup> AMPAS also had active exchanges with both national and international educational organizations, including the League of Nations' International Educational Cinematographic Institute, based in Rome. The Hollywood organization also furnished bibliographies, information for special topics, copies of scripts, music scores, still photographs, and reference services.<sup>74</sup>

This increased interest in film education was accompanied by a complementary rise in literature on film education. Previous scholarship has noted the increase in film education books during the 1930s, spurred in part by the publication of the Payne Fund Studies,<sup>75</sup> but numerous such works were published a decade earlier. These books, part of an explosion of interest in visual education, included *Motion Pictures in Education: A Practical Handbook for Users of Visual Aids*; *Visual Education: A Comparative Study of Motion Pictures and Other Methods of Instruction*; *The Film: Its Use in Popular Education*; and *Motion Pictures in the Classroom: An Experiment to Measure the Value of Motion Pictures as Supplementary Aids in Regular Classroom Instruction*.<sup>76</sup> By 1933, the interest in high school film appreciation had already generated a dissertation devoted to exploring its ramifications and potential.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, a range of national and international journals was founded that explicitly addressed the use of film in educational settings and for educational purposes: *Educational Screen* (1922–54); *Visual Education* (1920–24), and the *International Review of Educational Cinematography* (1929–34).<sup>78</sup> Also important were the influential ideas of John Dewey on American progressive education reform, which emphasized experiential learning, and the use of methods that combined the world of the classroom with the world outside. Yet film education was an internationally significant idea, vested with the hope of modernizing curriculum, using new pedagogical methods to address pressing contemporary issues.



The activities of educational organizations and the ideas they promulgated were undergirded by a notable increase in the number of projectors in schools and other sites, facilitated by the emergence of the 16mm standard in 1923. While estimates vary widely, Anthony Slide has indicated that by 1940 this network was supported by 6,059 silent film projectors and 6,384 sound projectors owned by both colleges and high schools.<sup>79</sup> Extant studies indicate that use of these projectors was high. For instance, a survey of 241 schools conducted in 1934 concluded that 83 percent of the schools polled had used motion pictures in classrooms, and 86 percent had used them in assembly halls. Larger schools in more affluent areas were more likely to have their own school film library, whereas smaller schools in rural areas were more likely to rent.<sup>80</sup> Film use was up generally, with one estimate suggesting, for instance, that during the period 1929 to 1936, one urban school system in Buffalo, New York, reported 494,178 classroom showings and 3,505 assembly showings.<sup>81</sup> This same study charted the proportional decline of 35mm and the explosive increase in 16mm films, rented and acquired, sometimes at a rate of fifty times faster than their 35mm counterparts.<sup>82</sup> Buttressed by an explosion in film literature in the second half of the 1930s and the rapid spread of the 16mm network, school curriculum gradually changed and was differentiated across fields of study. This period witnessed the rise of the term *film appreciation*, an area in which films were more likely to be treated as distinct forms of cultural expression. Relevant books include *Photoplay Appreciation in American High Schools*; *How to Judge Motion Pictures: A Pamphlet for High School Students*; *Film and School: A Handbook in Moving-Picture Evaluation*; *Talking Pictures: How They Are Made, How to Appreciate Them*; and *How to Appreciate Motion Pictures: A Manual of Motion Picture Criticism Prepared for High School Students*.<sup>83</sup> In 1935, the NEA reported that two thousand high schools offered courses solely devoted to film appreciation.<sup>84</sup>

As the classroom became an increasingly plausible site for film watching, a sizable field of engagement was opening. In addition to film appreciation, films were used in classrooms for a predictably expansive set of subjects: geography, physics, chemistry, English, art, history, and so on. The full impact of this basic shift of ideas and practices of education has yet to be fully assessed by film scholars. Schools became makeshift movie theaters, fed by numerous production and distribution houses, many of them based not in California but in Chicago. As this field grew, categories emerged to divide up the qualitatively different approaches to film's status as a pedagogical object and process. Most relevant to this present inquiry

are the ways in which Hollywood specifically sought to shape the consideration of film in what might be loosely termed the humanistic elements of curricular development, or what Lea Jacobs has called “the film education movement.”<sup>85</sup>

Jacobs defines the film education movement of the 1930s as one largely composed of social scientists and educators who were propelled by a primary interest to regulate the filmgoing habits of children and adolescents. However true, it is also important to note that a good portion of the study guides and remaining literature published throughout the 1920s and 1930s was aimed at interpellating middle-class adults—whether teachers, parents, or, more rarely, adult students—in ways of thinking about film that would arm them in their own practices of professional and community intervention. Generally, in practice and design, the term *film education* was applied loosely during this period, divided into two major substrands: character education and film appreciation. Some that worked under this banner primarily sought to use—with industry sanction—carefully selected clips from Hollywood and other films to stimulate discussion of morals, ethics, promiscuity, and crime and to instill a mode of film viewing dissociated from absorption and emotional investment and more closely aligned with rational distance. Terms such as *plausibility* and *realistic* became recurring criteria. *Character education* was the telling term used in this literature, linked to what Jacobs astutely identifies as educational strategies more overtly tied to regulatory concerns undergirded by gendered and ethnic assumptions about dangerous immigrants and vulnerable children. Study guides included questions about the dangers of promiscuity for young girls, as well as the threat of criminality and corruption for young boys, pivoting on identifying the “unrealistic” (as in glamorous) treatment of vice and of lost virtue. These same study guides also included prototypical and softly formal approaches to film analysis, such as the study of the director contained in Arthur Dale’s *How to Appreciate Motion Pictures*. Though clearly motivated by concern for the deleterious influence of the majority of motion pictures on children, Dale’s book also contained early attempts to develop a vocabulary to prepare students to analyze photographic style, narrative pacing, and costumes. This is usually termed *film appreciation*, more closely akin to the study of literature and the other arts. Yet these categories should not be seen as absolute. Frequently these study guides included less regulatory and more progressive impulses that encouraged children to think critically about imperialism, militarism, racist stereotypes, or the relationship of art to social responsibility.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, the division between the use of films for the study of moral and social

problems and the examination of film as an art is one that appears to have had little functional value and was rarely enforced. Improved skills of film analysis were frequently seen as inextricably linked to making sense of moral and social elements of a film, much like now.<sup>87</sup>

There is little remaining evidence of how these films were actually used in classrooms. The overall effect they had is unclear, although one aspect of such exercises is apparent: students often disagreed about what they saw and what it meant.<sup>88</sup> The industry role in supporting and shaping film education indicates that it sought to bolster its status as a good citizen by contributing to the progress of schools. This had the effect of encouraging a way of exhibiting and thinking about films that both complicated the status of commercial product, recuperating it or highlighting its institutional utility, and simultaneously encouraging avid film viewing as part of active and educated citizenship. The industry's triumph was in associating its commercial products and structures with edifying engagement. While opening itself up in a highly selective and controlled manner to film study, the industry seems to have successfully proved that facilitating the exhibition of films in schools was—as it continues to be—good business.

## 16MM AND FILM CULTURE

The possibility of a cinema fully integrated with public institutions found fertile ground in the growing 16mm network. Both of these factors crystallized in the figure of John Grierson, who, in 1935, wrote:

As I see it, the future of the cinema may not be in the cinema at all. It may even come humbly in the guise of propaganda and shamelessly in the guise of uplift and education. It may creep in quietly by way of the Y.M.C.A.s, the church halls and other citadels of suburban improvement. This is the future of the art of cinema, for in the commercial cinema there is no future worth serving.<sup>89</sup>

Of course, film culture did not diversify during this period simply because of the introduction of 16mm technology, or because of the ideas and practices encompassed by the possibility of a collection or library of films, or the vague but compelling idea that films might become objects of study. Many other movements were under way nationally and internationally that fed the rise of film art, political and subversive film activity, and the increasing sensibility that films should be studied to protect the social fabric and to disrupt it, to build nations and also disassemble them. Film collecting, programming, and repeat viewing through 16mm constituted one small,

integral and persistent link among these movements. The possibility of various audiences seeking out select films marks one point on the map of an audience aware of itself as having an explicit and conscious interest in seeing certain kinds of films in other than commercial, theatrical settings. Though this desire to see particular kinds of films was not necessarily new, the possibility of securing such films for exhibition was. Within this environment, 16mm became a key element in a powerful set of ideas as well as complex material configurations, inspiring its own collection of mini-manifestos and otherwise enthusiastic spokespeople, from within and outside the industry. The diminutive gauge also indicates a crucial development in the enduring ideal of small, specialized, self-operated, and automatic moving image display.

Writers for early film journals readily recognized the importance of acquiring and securing the means of exhibition. An editorial in the first issue of *Close Up*, an early and internationally distributed film journal, stated: "Before the full artistic possibilities of the cinema can be explored, it will be necessary to evolve an efficient and cheap projector for private use. The public of the future should be able to buy or borrow films as it now buys or borrows books . . . it is almost impossible to see any film over two years old, however important to the historian of cinematography."<sup>90</sup> *Close Up* was a modernist magazine devoted to film, featuring anticensorship declarations and other radical critiques of dominant film culture. The vitality of its criticism and theories—including its pioneering explorations of psychoanalytic aspects of cinema—was, in part, seen as dependent on the development of a whole film culture: that is, of institutions and networks that supported production and also distribution and exhibition. If films were to be integrated into an ongoing socio-aesthetic critical community, securing the very means by which such activities could be conducted and expanded was paramount.<sup>91</sup>

Several years later a similar call appeared in *Cinema Quarterly*, a journal largely dedicated to models of civic cinema, linked closely to the British documentary movement of the period. Substandard film, a generic term for non-35mm film, of which 16mm was the most prominent example, was considered one solution to two ongoing problems in the development of noncommercial cinema: (1) the need for experimentation in production and (2) the challenge of repertory in exhibition. Norman Wilson, frequent commentator for *Cinema Quarterly*, suggested:

If all the worthwhile films, after being fully exploited in the theatres, could be reduced to sub-standard dimensions it would be possible to form private and public libraries, so that the student or any owner of a

home projector could obtain and see films which are now finally inaccessible after their commercial exploitation. . . . It seems to have occurred to few people that the film, like the printed book, is a permanent record. Yet that is one of its main characteristics. That being so, it is reasonable that copies of films should be as readily accessible as books are.<sup>92</sup>

Developing a critical and artistic community around film required that films be available for general and studious viewing. The idea that film was a permanent record overlapped comfortably with the desire to establish a permanent library that would house these records—old and new, conventional and experimental—and make them continually available to the public.<sup>93</sup> The very future of the cinema as a vibrant, expressive form was linked to this possibility. To further contribute to this project, publications such as *Cinema Quarterly* set out to review 16mm films in existing, primarily commercial, substandard libraries. In doing so, they came to more clearly recognize that just as desired films were difficult to locate and therefore exhibit, so too were old films and “film classics.”<sup>94</sup> Thus, by 1934, the journal staff had generated a record of available substandard films of a documentary, educational, or experimental nature in order to facilitate 16mm film exchange.

Importantly, calls for increased access to films had also acquired a historical dimension, as an expanding film community increasingly looked beyond the current commercial offerings. While the example of *Cinema Quarterly* obviously reflects trends in British film culture of the period, such efforts bespeak a growing demand in film culture generally. Not only were these journals distributed outside of Britain but the film culture that was emerging internationally at this time faced similar challenges, as is apparent in the contemporaneous international emergence of film archives and the concurrent international spread of film societies. The frequent calls by the growing network of film writers, critics, and scholars for increased access to films only punctuated the trend.

The strong link between 16mm film libraries and what we have come to call early film archives is also an important one that places the development of archives in a broader sociohistorical perspective. Film libraries were a response to the expanding utility of film and the perceived need to make more films more accessible to those developing alternatives to Hollywood’s commercial and international dominance. As a result, viewing conditions were becoming less beholden to the ephemeral distribution and exhibition patterns that undergirded the common sense of cinema. Non-theatrical exhibition, then, was about relocating not just films but also film

watching. It was a project vested with securing the means for repeat viewing and purposeful programming. It further enabled the co-articulation of moving images with institutional models other than commercial cinema and the generation of discursive frameworks less dependent on Hollywood.

The film libraries and exhibition contexts that emerged had diverse politics. Julien Levy provides one example. In the early 1930s, 16mm exhibition became part of a growing community interested in film for its potential contribution to and participation in the traditional arts. Levy was a part of the American modern art scene, establishing one of the early galleries—the Julien Levy Gallery—devoted exclusively to modern art in New York City in the late 1920s. Levy conceived of a collection of films, printed on 16mm stock, designed with two purposes: as valuable objets d'art conceived by famous painters and as a reference library of biographical portraits, depicting the lives and art of well-known modern artists. He wrote: "Films conceived by such important painters as Duchamp, Léger, or Dalí should command much the same value as a canvas from their hand, and if a collector's market could be organized, I thought to persuade other painters to experiment in this medium. I had been making casual films of my own, hoping that these would add up to a small library of film portraits."<sup>95</sup> Levy's portraits were intended to be dynamic and animated, featuring biographical material on chosen artists, presented in accordance with their respective painting styles. He hoped to build this library in order both to exhibit such films in his gallery, alongside paintings and sculptures, and to sell them to collectors. This was plainly a project seeking to inscribe film into the logics of the object-oriented art market. Levy was well aware that no such market existed. Little evidence remains of what this library came to look like. Levy was, however, successful in acquiring 16mm prints of Fernand Léger's *Ballet Mécanique* (1924); Marcel Duchamp's *Anémic Cinéma* (1926); Salvador Dalí and Luis Buñuel's *Un Chien Andalou* (1928) and *L'Âge d'Or* (1930); Man Ray's *L'Étoile de Mer* (1928); Kurt Weill and G. W. Pabst's *Dreigroschenoper* (*Threepenny Opera*) (1931); and Jay Leyda's *A Bronx Morning* (1931). Only one artist's portrait—that of Max Ernst—was ever completed, although portraits of Constantin Brancusi, Fernand Léger, Mina Loy, and Campigli were begun.<sup>96</sup> Levy's library and gallery space also hosted some of the screenings of the New York Film Society, of which he was an active member. However, his experiments with a film library and film exhibition were short-lived.

In contrast to the high-aesthetic and market-driven experiments of Levy were the activist interventions of the Workers Film and Photo

League. Working under the aegis of the Workers' International Relief, itself an outgrowth of the Communist Party, the league was an association of cinematographers, photographers, intellectuals, and activists. Accompanied by other organizations committed to theater, dance, and traditional art, the WFPL set out to raise workers' consciousness regarding their common oppression by using films and photographs to document worker activity, to propagate Communist Party values, and to agitate against capitalist domination generally and capitalist domination of film particularly. Its manifesto, written by Harry Alan Potamkin and originally published in *Workers' Theater* in 1931, was entitled "A Movie Call to Action!"<sup>97</sup> This document announced nothing less than the creation of a national, alternative film economy. Potamkin called for a network of film audiences, to which the league would distribute documents of corporate injustice against laborers as well as suppressed and neglected films of significance.<sup>98</sup>

Officially established under the WFPL banner in 1930, the league overtly politicized film through both production and exhibition activities. It held public demonstrations against commercial films with right-wing, antiworker or anti-Semitic themes. It made 35mm newsreels of worker activities and strike actions. Using its branch offices throughout the country as distribution centers, as well as traveling projectionists, it exhibited these and other (mostly Soviet) films. The league also instituted a series of screenings in New York City in 1934, charging a yearly subscription rate of \$2.00 (the equivalent of \$27.43 in 2003). Such titles were shown on silent 35mm projectors; they were also reduced in size to service the growing network of 16mm projectors.<sup>99</sup> These screenings of "distinguished films" were held regularly in the auditorium of the New School for Social Research.<sup>100</sup> Internal disputes over resource allocation and aesthetic strategies led to rifts in the activities of the league in the mid-1930s. Nevertheless, at its 1934 conference, 16mm was officially adopted as the basic gauge for local and national exhibition, and a national film exchange was declared both desirable and necessary.<sup>101</sup> Thirty-five millimeter was maintained as the standard gauge for national production, with an aim to attaining greater hold on theatrical exhibition. Yet, even before the WFPL's official adoption of 16mm, its exhibition practices—primarily showing Soviet features and newsreel footage to workers' groups throughout the country—depended on 16mm exhibition equipment. Workers' camps, union halls, barns, and homes often required the portability, versatility, safety, and comparatively low cost offered by 16mm.<sup>102</sup>

While the WFPL itself had a library of films it distributed to unions, liberal clubs, YMCAs, and social, literary, and music groups, the reach of this

library was never as extensive as league members hoped it would be. Recognizing that distribution was a serious challenge to extending this network of films, league member Tom Brandon formed Garrison Films with the intention of expanding distribution. This project was reportedly moderately successful. Sixteen-millimeter film networks were established in the Midwest, composed of either workers' clubs or smaller collections of farming villages and towns.<sup>103</sup> Underlying the accumulation of a 16mm library and its relationship to expanded distribution and exhibition networks was the desire of the league to exhibit a certain kind of film otherwise unavailable to its constituents. The WFPL film library had no pretensions to universality and owed little debt to conventional categories of quality. It was a partisan and politicized tool, designed to catalyze a growing, critical public. The increasing mobility of film aided and abetted its plan to effect a very different cinematic institution.

Unlike the overtly political WFPL, the Amateur Cinema League (ACL) comprised a loose collection of hobbyists and civic-minded individuals seeking to explore film form and technique usually for less radical and more leisurely ends. Nevertheless, the ACL had its own library needs, and in 1927, only one year after the organization's official formation, a film library was established. The library served league members, providing films deemed exemplary to local ACL clubs. Arthur Gale, a prominent member of the ACL, wrote that the primary purpose of the library was to "provide an adequate distribution of amateur photoplays, secure a dependable event for club programs and, as well, encourage new groups to undertake amateur productions."<sup>104</sup> The library was considered an active element in a growing amateur filmmaking and exhibition movement, collecting films and securing exhibition sites for films otherwise lacking such a circuit. It was primarily confined to collecting and lending films that were assigned a place on the league's annual "10-Best" list, many of which were travelogues. Yet some of these films have come to be considered early examples of American avant-garde filmmaking, such as *Lot in Sodom* (1933) and *Fall of the House of Usher* (James Sibley Watson and Melville Webber, 1928); *The Tell-Tale Heart* (Charles Klein, 1928); *H<sub>2</sub>O* (Ralph Steiner, 1929); *Portrait of a Young Man* (Henwar Rodakiewicz, 1931); and *Mr. Motorboat's Last Stand* (Theodore Huff and John Florey, 1933). Many of these films were screened throughout the United States, participating in one of the most extensive nontheatrical film circuits extant.<sup>105</sup>

The ACL library was also particularly useful for branches of the league that had set out on their own projects to discover the essence of film art through a study of "prominent examples of its various stages of develop-



ment."<sup>106</sup> Some amateurs had become students of film form, eager to understand more about cinematic technique.<sup>107</sup> Hiram Maxim Percy, president of the league, suggested that amateur moviemaking had begun to involve discussions of the "what" of film rather than simply the "how."<sup>108</sup> Access to a library of films was important for amateur filmmakers pursuing such studies. While many amateurs remained primarily interested in making travelogues and personal documents or home movies, the movement was not entirely reducible to these subjects. Concern for film form and experimentation is also evident in articles published in the league's journal, *Amateur Movie Makers*, retitled *Movie Makers* in 1928. Early in the development of the league, formal experimentation was encouraged by left-leaning critics such as Harry Alan Potamkin, Jay Leyda, Gilbert Seldes, and Herman Weinberg, who wrote commentary and film reviews for the journal.<sup>109</sup> Also running through the late 1920s to the early 1930s was a series of reviews entitled "Photoplayfare: Reviews for the Cinetelligenza." The films reviewed in this series were far-ranging and included German, Soviet, French, and American works. In its earliest days, the amateur movement constituted one of the primary outlets for film-related activities just beyond Hollywood's borders. This, by necessity, included exhibition outside of studio-dominated theaters. As such, the importance of establishing distribution and exhibition outlets for amateurs easily fed the idea of establishing little theaters, theatrical venues designed to show commercially unviable cinema, discussed earlier. The ACL magazine was a strong proponent of this idea, also hosting other models for exhibition. One such project included a theater whose programming looked much like television, changing throughout the day and ranging from gardening programs in the afternoon to amateur features at night.<sup>110</sup> While the ACL library does not seem to have directly fed the struggling little theaters, their concurrent experiments provide an index to the basic challenges of collection, distribution, and exhibition for those interested in expanding cinema's institution. Some aspects of league members' interventions were aesthetically radical, and others not necessarily so. Members brought diverse interests to bear on film-related activities. Ties to the industry were evident in regular announcements of corporate executive appointments, profiles of industry leaders, and a general gung ho enthusiasm about film technology. Advertising revenue from technology companies made the magazine possible. Yet ties to the critical and experimental community were evident in the same journal, featuring articles on film form, non-American films, and aesthetic experiments. Important for the purposes of this chapter is the diversified system of film exchanges connected to league activities. Collec-

tively, league members constituted one of the largest audiences for non-commercial film exhibition, which was supported not only by its lending library but also by swap systems conducted through the pages of *Movie Makers*. Reinventing cinema as something to be actively and daily made entailed transforming film production, distribution, and exhibition, that is, a mature cinema also involved changing what it meant to watch.

#### FORMATIVE INFRASTRUCTURES AND LASTING GROOVES

Increasingly plausible and institutionally supported during this period was the idea that one might view a film armed with an apparatus of knowledge and ways of thinking that addressed the specificities of the cinema as a complex and distinct phenomenon. These ideas and practices were fed most forcefully though not exclusively by middle-class institutions and were also linked to ongoing industry strategies to find generally agreed upon and ostensibly virtuous social functions for film: to educate young and old alike. The range of ideas about an educational cinema accompanied an expanding circuit of 16mm films and projectors. Thus provided were the basic building blocks of a growing film network, independent of the need for professional entertainers or itinerant projectionists, linking homes as well as private and public institutions in an identifiable cultural and material configuration. The spread of this network was facilitated by a particular conception of moving images that concretized a reaction against the idea that film was essentially a mass entertainment or a spectacular and sensational urban leisure. Further, the growing network was undergirded by the ideologically weighty premise that watching moving images was not a sign of moral decay and danger but an important method of participating in public life. Essential within this is also the most basic and reassuring idea of the specialized and unique, rather than the vast and faceless, movie audience. The specialized film audience was evident both within and outside of what is conventionally understood as film culture, making its way into national educational organizations, schools, museums, and civic groups, as well as film societies and proto-art house cinemas.

Previous work on the 16mm gauge has concentrated on its importance for tracing the discursive construction of crucial and lasting aesthetic hierarchies that effectively rendered 16mm an amateur and thus subordinate gauge to 35mm and professional filmmaking.<sup>111</sup> This chapter complements extant work by exploring the implications of 16mm less for filmmaking

and more for film watching. This network, an important and underexamined one for film history, indicates several things. First, it marks a reform strategy distinct from the overt regulation of movie theaters and film content by middle-class reformers and religious groups. MoMA, and the film education and museum movement of which it was a part, marks a clear move toward the creation of spaces in which moviegoers were interpellated into an apparatus of film viewing and of criticism that presumed their willingness to engage more fully in institutional logics of study that—at least in theory—actively worked to contain Hollywood’s threat and simultaneously strengthen the social fabric. The logic of discursive critique and detailed examination of the film text as a strategy of protection from commercial leisure spread, effectively differentiating the audience into those who were capable and protected and those who were not. Second, it also marks the beginning of an infrastructure wherein films were more readily detachable from the commercial logics of theatrical exhibition and more beholden to a wider range of exhibition scenarios. The significance of this cannot be wholly reduced to the successes of middle-class or moral reformers, since a range of organizations emerged, creating a national and non-theatrical environment that facilitated ideologically complex models for cinema. These included bourgeois institutions of appreciation but also workers’ groups, politicized experiments in film form, as well as a new generation of engaged spectators, scholars, and students of cinema.

In mapping out exhibition shifts endemic to this period, then, it is crucial to remember that many of these changes complement long-standing efforts of the film industry to win relief from regulation by associating Hollywood films less with working-class leisure and more with established cultural institutions sanctioned by the middle classes. Yet such projects also indicate foundational efforts to carve out distinct exhibition spaces that functioned at one remove from commercial cinemagoing and also fed alternative models for film and culture. Changes in technology (16mm) as well as in ways of thinking about film’s utility beyond entertainment were key factors in this transformation. The more familiar impetus toward internationalist and specialist exhibition strategies geared to facilitate screenings of films not available in commercial cinemas—classics, experimental, political, foreign—was another. Each of these developments fed an emergent cultural configuration that provided not just the enabling conditions for an organization such as MoMA’s Film Library but also the early seeds for film, media, and cultural studies as fields of scholarly inquiry.

For many collectors, librarians, archivists, and would-be programmers, 16mm was an imperfect solution to a vexing problem: how to foster film

appreciation, study, and criticism with limited means. The quality of 16mm did not please film purists. Nevertheless, 16mm exhibition was better than no exhibition at all. The formation of film libraries was partly an effort to wrest control away from commercial systems unfriendly to the aspirations of more specialized groups determined to shape film to their purposes. At times this activity was politically subversive, such as that engaged in by the WFPL; at other times it was more fully imbricated in dominant industry strategies such as the case with schools and frequently universities.<sup>112</sup> The one thing such screenings had in common was the fertilization of a distinct circuit of films and film exhibition. The film libraries and film exchange enabled by 16mm provided one link in a greater and more complex chain: a storehouse of knowledge that was subject, on the one hand, to the seemingly contradictory pulls of capitalism—positioning film both as knowledge and as commodity—and, on the other, to the sprawling use of these conditions by a mobile public.

### 3 The Mass Museology of the Modern

As the Museum of Modern Art is a living museum, not a collection of curious and interesting objects, it can, therefore, become an integral part of our democratic institutions—it can be woven into the very warp and woof of our democracy. Because it has been conceived as a national institution, the museum can enrich and invigorate our cultural life by bringing the best of modern art to all of the American people. This, I am gratified to learn, will be done through the traveling exhibitions of the museum. . . . By this means the gap between the artists and American industry, and the great American public, can be bridged. And most important of all, the standards of American taste will inevitably be raised by thus bringing into far-flung communities results of the latest and finest achievements in all the arts.

FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT, 1939<sup>1</sup>

When Franklin Delano Roosevelt referred to MoMA as a “living museum” in 1939, the idea of a vital and sentient storehouse was not new. Indeed, the possibility of a museum that actively conjoined the objects it housed and the public at large was an increasingly prominent theme among museum professionals from the turn of the century forward.<sup>2</sup> The metaphor of “living” performed a complicated kind of work. On the one hand, it responded to the generally held belief that museums were more like mausoleums, isolated outposts where dead things stared down time. On the other hand, it named a strategy to model museums and museum work on the established circuit of similar institutions such as libraries and YMCAs, which had effectively created new public formations around reading books. Indeed, American museum officers frequently likened a range of objects—rocks, skeletons, art—to the book, an otherwise inert thing that could be charged with ideas and practices constituting an expanded museum public. The growing network that resulted relied upon technologies such as photography, film, and inexpensive pamphlets and books, whose reproducibility helped to accelerate the circulation of museum objects and their related

discourses. Through these media, curators and educators developed the means by which the knowledge they generated would extend beyond any singular outpost and thus more effectively shape their public, securing their authoritative place in the emerging landscape of modern leisure. To some degree, the field of art history, art journalism, art catalogues, coffee-table books, blockbuster exhibits, and even the seemingly ubiquitous gift shop owe their genesis to the potential and the perils of this living, mediated museum.

The Museum of Modern Art's Film Library formed during a period in which efforts to realize the "living museum" had accelerated considerably. The museum's technological network expanded to include newspapers, radio, and even television. American museums were, in general, undergoing considerable changes in their curatorial practices, funding sources, and basic institutional structure. The Museum of Modern Art, in particular, embodied many of these transformations. During its first ten years (1929 to 1939), MoMA was widely considered an innovative and unusual undertaking and quickly became a flagship American institution of national and international art, representing the best as well as the newest of modern works. Like many American museums, MoMA was established with the resources of wealthy industrialists and a cadre of East Coast elites who conceived of the museum, from the beginning, as a national educational experiment of vital importance. By making use of established and emergent methods of curation that embraced media technologies, MoMA enacted the ideals of not just the modern but also the mobile. In other words, the living museum had become a modern and mass-mediated museum.

Under the directorship of Alfred H. Barr and in conjunction with other contemporary aesthetic and museological movements, MoMA was—and remains—an imposing figure in the world of art museums. This is due in large part to its fusion of ideas about art and institutions, which yielded a museum that expanded the shape and scope of twentieth-century art institutions more generally. MoMA boldly announced that art would not be limited to the rarefied forms of painting and sculpture; nor would it reside safely within the museum's consecrated walls. MoMA housed the industrial, mechanical, and popular arts. Valuing education alongside ideals of aesthetic excellence, its curators actively designed and circulated printed publications and prepackaged exhibits, radio, and television programs (figure 4). Together these two impulses yielded a museological model that embraced mass media and consumer culture as an integral means for disseminating ideas, images, and—occasionally—objects of art. MoMA's exhibits could be heard on the radio and seen in classrooms, department



FIGURE 4. William Lescaze and Edward Warburg at Museum of Modern Art opening, posing with radio and modern art, 1939. Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

store windows, mass-circulated picture magazines, and the lobbies of movie theaters.

Recent work in cultural studies, art history, and museum studies has examined the museum—in its many varieties—by referencing a range of debates about aesthetics, politics, and institutions. Analyzing its modes of display, its selected art, and its architecture, scholars have shown that museums are ideologically complex sites, often rife with crucial legitimating activities affirming dominant culture and concomitant powers of state. The most exciting of this work conceives of the museum as a point of convergence or, as Daniel Sherman and Irit Rogoff have written, “as an amalgam of historical structures and narratives, practices and strategies of display, and the concerns and imperatives of various governing ideologies.”<sup>3</sup> This body of writing includes divergent methodologies, ranging from Foucauldian analyses of the museum’s governmental logics to detailed formal analysis of the museum’s modernist, masculinist art canon.<sup>4</sup> In the bulk of this work, the modern art museum has largely been presumed to be a discrete site through which disparate ideologies of art and the individual have been invoked. Even Pierre Bourdieu’s sociological approach to the class biases of the art museum and its visitors similarly conceives of the institu-

tion as an identifiable “place of worship,” wherein particular forms of knowledge are mobilized and legitimated through its rituals of classification, description, and codes of behavior.<sup>5</sup> Some of this recent work has focused specifically on MoMA, analyzing modes of display or particular exhibitions, linking formal aesthetic critique with the museum’s modernist ideologies of aesthetic autonomy, creative genius, and gendered subjugations.<sup>6</sup> To be sure, studies that have explicitly attempted to link MoMA to practices and politics outside of its walls have been crucial for thinking through the multidimensional art world.<sup>7</sup> Yet the collective tendency of work on art museums has been to either simplify or ignore their long-standing relationship to extramuseological modes of modern display: radio, television, newspapers, magazines, film.<sup>8</sup> In short, despite the fact that current debates have demonstrated that the museum is not an autonomous institution, more work needs to be done to understand the long-standing and expanded functions of museums in the mediated cultural contexts that constitute modern life.

One of the central reasons for expanding our understanding of how, where, and by what means museums operate is to generate a fuller assessment of their place in the politics of cultural value, leisure, and institutional authority. In the bulk of such discussions, museums—especially art museums—and mass media tend to occupy opposite roles. The former maintains a sharp divide between high and low culture; the latter dissolves such distinctions. Yet, as Lynn Spigel has shown through a discussion of art and television in the 1950s, institutions of art and media are inextricably linked. Using Andreas Huyssen’s indispensable work on the “great divide” that characterized so many discourses of modernism, Spigel shows that television was instrumental in reconfiguring but not obliterating previously distinct categories such as high and low, art and commodity, original and copy.<sup>9</sup> Yet there remains a vital absence in our knowledge of the ways in which television and many other media have long participated in a complex dialectic and, perhaps, dissolve. Indeed, museums themselves were being reshaped through a pervasive set of ideas and discourses catalyzed particularly from the 1920s forward through a range of mass media and middlebrow cultural forms antecedent to television. In what follows, I borrow from the recent critical thrust of museum studies, in part, by conceiving of the American modern art museum as a material project of coordination, aligning authoritative systems of knowledge, modes of exhibition, and behavioral ideals. I extend this line of thinking, largely by foregrounding MoMA’s enduring appropriation of what Walter Benjamin termed the conditions of art’s reproducibility.<sup>10</sup> In doing so, I argue that MoMA has



long been not only a productive and identifiable site on the map of cultural politics and authority but also a sprawling and mediated system, aimed at producing particular kinds of knowledge, shaping leisure, and producing ideals of moral selfhood through its embrace of the ephemeral and tentacular means of the mass media.

Throughout the twentieth century, alongside bookmobiles, home encyclopedias, book-of-the-month clubs, and filmed Shakespeare, the sites and texts of culture have been increasingly mobilized by the logics of modern media.<sup>11</sup> The modern art museum was no exception. More than a singular site from which high formalism was pronounced or masculinist genius celebrated, the modern museum has also been an increasingly mobile museum, integrated around technologies of mechanical reproduction, distribution, and exhibition. The mediated materiality of the twentieth-century museum requires us to seriously rethink the boundaries of the institution, as well as the means and methods of its authority. Conceptualizing the museum in this way contributes several crucial insights to the debate about museums. Not least of these is the challenge to the idea that the museum has largely constructed itself outside of time as a repository of eternal value and a singular shrine to aesthetic virtue. While certainly true in part, this basic assertion must be rethought in light of histories of transient exhibition. Temporary exhibits, traveling exhibits, radio shows, film libraries, magazine art features, postcards, and coffee-table art books have been part of the museological function for the better part of the twentieth century. Timeless masterpieces, cultural authority, and aesthetic refinement have all long been at home in the ephemeral, disposable, and prosaic forms that constitute modern life.

The following explores the cultural, intellectual, and institutional history of MoMA and its relationship to film through museological culture of the 1930s. Rather than concentrating on the paintings MoMA collected or the manner in which its art objects were displayed, this chapter focuses more on the ways in which ideas about art and museums found comfort in the means and methods of mass media. My primary aim here is to address the multiple factors underpinning the accommodation of film at MoMA. In so doing, I intend to show that the modern museum was one whose operations were deeply informed by new modes of exhibition that had far less to do with a museum conceived as a transcendent repository and much more to do with a museum designed as a living, adaptable, and expansive web. New ideas about what expressive media might constitute art added to the mix. MoMA sat in the middle of a generative convergence of seemingly irreconcilable cultural phenomena, including the European avant-garde's

commitment to politicized multimediated aesthetics, the ascendance of advertising and the middlebrow press, and American reformist ideas about art education.

The Film Library served a double purpose within MoMA's new mass museology. Not only were particular films deemed to exemplify the new arts of motion, montage, and abstraction but so, too, was cinema's interpenetration with modern means of distribution, exhibition, and other media something of a model for the new museum. The cinema's links to celebrity did not hurt either. In other words, the Film Library emerged at a time when the shape of the art museum was becoming more protean, more attuned to sizable and transient audiences, and more closely linked to other mass-mediated forms. In short, the modern museum was modern in more ways than one.

To begin this chapter, I want to briefly identify two crucial assumptions upon which my argument depends. The first is a particular way of thinking about modern art, and the second is a particular way of thinking about modern museums. Inspired by debates in cultural materialism, the following presumes art and its institutions to be best understood dialectically within their own sociohistorical and material circumstances. Rather than accepting a common understanding of modernism (sometimes called *high modernism*) as an idealist ethos asserting formalism, aesthetic autonomy, individualism, and internationalism, I presume the term modernism to index a vast movement spanning national, political, and aesthetic borders and encompassing a broad range of movements in literature and the performing and visual arts. In other words, modernism was a sociohistorically specific development that was deeply implicated in the technological, political, and cultural conditions in which it emerged. Explicating its commitments to formal abstraction and aesthetic autonomy explains little of the expansive series of ideas, practices, and political commitments designated by the umbrella term *modernism* and explains even less about the very conditions of possibility for modernist practice itself.

In tracing the history of modernism, for instance, Raymond Williams has suggested that modern art was the product of struggles to express and respond to the changing conditions of modern life: urbanization, industrialization, the rise of technology, the increase in leisure time, the spread of consumer capitalism, and the reconfigurations of time, space, and consciousness that emerged contemporaneously. According to Williams, the modernist critique of art by artists began less with a transcendental project to reveal truth or explore beauty than with a material need to manage a new kind of art that (1) challenged the long-held precepts of mimetic representation, (2)

pursued the possibilities of ongoing experiments with form, and (3) sought to forge new relationships between the artist and the socioeconomic order.<sup>12</sup> In its most radical form, the modernist critique turned into an avant-garde movement, one that used the conditions of modernity and the unfolding precepts of modern art to question the very foundation of artistic practice—ideas such as genius and autonomy, and institutions such as patronage and connoisseurship. Appropriating the power of art—seeking to infuse it with elements of the prosaic, ephemeral, profane, and technological world—the avant-garde attempted “to organize a new life praxis from a basis in art,” forging a sociopolitical vision to art itself.<sup>13</sup>

If one accepts the materialist approach to modern art, one must also accept that mass culture played a vital role in many of modernism’s various phases. Objects, techniques, and forms emerging from urban industrialized culture became primary materials both to embolden the attack on bourgeois art and to provide what Andreas Huyssen has described as the “hidden dialectic” in projects to fortify bourgeois and elite art that was reacting against the forces of modernization.<sup>14</sup> In terms of American art museums, the crux of the modern critique and the latent mass within modernism presented its own problems. Many such museums were founded on the presumed moral authority of the elite via the middle classes to reform the great and threatening masses, and they relied on traditional ideas aligning aesthetic perfection, mimetic representation, and beauty with the proper moral development of the individual—precisely the ideas that the avant-garde sought to dismantle. Mass culture has historically constituted both a productive means by which the modernist critique was elaborated (the anti-bourgeois practices and writing of surrealism, Dada, constructivism, and so on) and an object of that critique, particularly within the discourses of high modernism. Given this, what did mass culture mean for the art museum in general, and for the American modern art museum in particular?

At MoMA, the project to manage—if not sustain—the contradictions between anti-institutional art and reformist institutional mandates found a significant stage in the materialities and ideologies of the media. To gain access to the ensuing dynamics, this chapter approaches the museum dialectically and as a participant in a whole cultural field consisting of the ongoing tensions between institutional authority and an unruly public, between the ideals of formal experiment and the practice of a changing museological apparatus. In conceptualizing the museum this way, I do not in any fashion want to suggest that this radically simplifies the ongoing and crucial critiques of institutionalized art and its relationship to hierarchies of taste, class, gender, and race. Rather, I seek to identify the long-

standing and multiplying fronts upon which those battles have long been played out—fields that require considerable rethinking of the spaces, temporalities, and technologies of art and exhibition.

#### MODERNISM AND THE AMERICAN ART WORLD

To understand why MoMA took the shape it did, one must look both beyond the influence of great men and closer to home than the compelling debates found in modern manifestos, theories, and other vestiges of aesthetic ferment. It is crucial to consider MoMA's relationship to American museological and art culture. By the time MoMA was founded in 1929, modern art and artists had claimed some status in the New York art world through groundbreaking exhibits such as the Armory Show (held in 1913), the International Exhibition of Modern Art (1926), and the Machine Age Exposition (1927). A host of smaller galleries with clear interests in modern art had opened, most notably the Société Anonyme, Inc. (Katherine Dreier and Marcel Duchamp), Gallery 291 (Alfred Stieglitz), and the Whitney Studio Club (Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney; in 1931 the Studio Club became the Whitney Museum). It was during this period that discussions of modern art, aided by the exhibits, lectures, and publications of these groups, rose above the occasional and novel and became more widespread and sophisticated. Journals such as *Art News*, *Arts*, *Arts and Decoration*, and *Studio International*, little magazines such as the *Dial*, and political newspapers such as the *Freeman* and the *Nation* each added to the debate. Such discussions unevenly supported the varied strands of modernism. Impressionism, for instance, was in general more warmly received than the comparatively disruptive works of Dada or constructivism. The most reputable and established museums, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art (the Met), demonstrated an extremely cautious relationship to the more abstract examples of modern art, conducting only the most limited of exhibitions and acquiring virtually none.<sup>15</sup> In 1929, MoMA emerged as the most authoritative, well-funded American institution dedicated exclusively, comprehensively, and explicitly to modern art and its accompanying debates. It conceived of itself as something of a corrective to the conservatism of the grand Metropolitan and to the small-scale and decentralized network of the galleries.

Practices and exhibitions of modern art emerged in dialogue with a more general set of cultural debates in American life. Lawrence Levine has characterized the practices of American museums during the period pre-

ceding MoMA's establishment as part of a broad shift under way in American cultural institutions generally. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, concepts of culture and the more specific phenomena under this rubric (opera, theater, libraries, and museums) became increasingly associated with ideals of contemplation, reverence, and seriousness; the concept of culture was invoked alongside such terms as *worth*, *purity*, and *beauty*.<sup>16</sup> Art museums as well as other institutions of culture had gradually come to embody the sentiment, expressed in Matthew Arnold's writings, that culture was the best of what had been thought, known, or expressed.<sup>17</sup> As a part of this shift, museological practice moved from the general and the eclectic to the exclusive and the specific, focusing on the appreciation of great works rather than on the previous fascination with curiosities. Moreover, as Levine notes, cultural institutions were construed as existing apart from the everyday, depending on an "exaggerated antithesis between art and life, between the aesthetic and the Philistine, the worthy and the unworthy, the pure and the tainted." Complementing this imposition of distance was a coincident Eurocentric bias in American culture that served to further demarcate and fortify aesthetic hierarchies, marking art as something spatially and temporally distant from everyday life. As Levine documents, Eurocentric biases were common among the American elite, who preferred the idea that what is truly cultural should be approached with "disciplined knowledge," "serious purpose," and, most important, a "feeling of reverence."<sup>18</sup> Additionally, looking back to the great European masters was also part of a conscious gesture toward models of culture that were intended to civilize Americans through borrowed or, in Eric Hobsbawm's terms, "invented traditions."<sup>19</sup> Such tendencies, of course, were coincident with the rise of vast numbers of European immigrants—a very different kind of European influence—and working-class Americans in urban centers who were redefining culture through leisure practices involving amusement parks, vaudeville, movies theaters, and other modes of popular pleasure. In short, institutionalized Eurocentric distinctions between high and low cultural forms were part of a larger project to reform the social body by shaping its leisure activities—to civilize a polyglot America by taming it with European art's selective past. In theory, rituals of art would help to control the ostensibly dangerous urban crowd, rendering its threatening refigurations of public space, gender relations, and class-differentiated activities more manageable.<sup>20</sup> The ideal museum stood as an example of proper civic conduct; the bawdy nickelodeon did not.

The cultural hierarchies documented by Levine are firmly lodged within the persistent debates about the responsibility of museums to involve a

wider public, coaxing curators and programmers to effectively engage with a sizable public usually conceived as vulnerable, ignorant, and in need of the museum's civilizing effects. Education and extension programs, which would later powerfully be joined with public relations departments, have long been a part of American museums of art as well as museums of science, industry, and history, embedded in their charters and variably manifest in their activities. As a site of museum activity and therefore study, such educational programs have further shaped the experience of the museum and therefore suggest two important questions: (1) How were the dominant values of the museum furthered by its educational programs, which included written materials, tours, lectures, and quizzes? (2) How were the aura and the reverence otherwise carefully secured by museum design and behavioral dictates affected by the comparatively interactive nature of these activities and the basic changes they introduced to the spaces in which art could be found? In other words, these programs changed exhibition space either by making it discursive and dialogical or by making it mobile. Art could be shown in a classroom, a women's club, or a YMCA. How did this impact upon the power of the museum to evoke particular kinds of values or procure ideal behaviors? In what ways might such programs have enacted more democratic models of art or furthered the class bias of cultural institutions?

Museum programs designed to foster learning began as early as the 1870s at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, which turned its empty space into classrooms and made its collection available to students. At the turn of the century, the term *docent* was coined to designate a new role for museum guides, who were conceived as both students and teachers and were tasked with guiding visitors through collections and exhibitions, providing explanations and instruction about displayed objects. Traveling educators with lantern slides and elaborate lectures filled museum auditoriums. Adults were served by regular presentations, which were animated by photographic or painted slides, held in the evenings and on Saturday afternoons to facilitate the attendance of working people and encourage family participation. Formal gallery talks, group tours, and discussion groups also emerged as standard museum activities during this period. Lectures and programs were organized in conjunction with public schools as well. Children's clubs, children's rooms and galleries, and after-school and Saturday classes were instituted. Such activities were conducted in art museums but were significantly more common in museums of science and nature.<sup>21</sup> Groups that functioned largely at locations far away from the museum also sought use of its resources. YMCAs, YWCAs, 4-H Clubs, and Boy

Scout and Girl Scout groups made field trips wherein museum workers attempted to engage children sometimes with lectures but more often with games, quizzes, and treasure hunts orchestrated around exhibitions, objects, and artworks.

The difficulty of travel to the museum and the constraints of the museum's physical immobility soon gave way to the institutionalization of extension programs. American museums actively began to assemble traveling exhibitions, packages of educational materials, printed matter, lantern slides, mounted objects, and sometimes films, film stills, and filmstrips.<sup>22</sup> Such methods were particularly important for art museums because reproductions made possible the wider dissemination of otherwise fragile and expensive art images. Almost as soon as it formed, the patriarch of American art museums, the Metropolitan (established in New York in 1870) circulated etchings of its fledgling collection to European museums as a way to publicize its project. It also sold these same etchings to museum members. As early as 1874 it had contracted with a local photographer both to make records of the art it held and to sell copies of these photographic records for profit.<sup>23</sup> By 1911, the Met had developed a circulating library of lantern slides, mounted pictures, and photographs that were paired with screens, lanterns, and scripted lectures.<sup>24</sup> The museum established a circulating film library in 1922, and by the mid-1930s, it had developed a library that held films whose production was sponsored by the museum itself, as well as films it obtained from other sources. It both regularly exhibited these films on-site and lent them to other museums and interest groups. Subjects reportedly included travel, history, biography, and art appreciation.<sup>25</sup> Staff of the Met engaged in lengthy discussions about the place of film in their museum. The distinctiveness of film's aesthetic development was never at stake. The staff focused on how film could best improve exposure to and understanding of the museum's works of art, as well as subjects appealing to its clearly class-biased constituency. The museum largely sought to dramatize its own collections, rendering them more accessible and engaging. Essentially, the Met's use of film consisted in prepackaged lessons in art interpretation, making both the art and the lesson mechanically reproducible, and therefore mobile as well. These films fit readily into the museum's much earlier and diversified traveling exhibits.

Indeed, from a very early point in the development of motion pictures, museums eagerly embraced the medium as both a technological artifact and an educational tool.<sup>26</sup> The exhibition of moving images, as well as the display of film cameras, projectors, and other gadgets, dates to the earliest days of cinema. Museums of natural history were particularly friendly

to the medium. For instance, the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) exhibited films as early as 1907. In addition to the museum's sizable lantern slide collection—containing 35,000 items, by some estimates—by 1911, such films could be seen regularly in its auditorium on topics ranging from the safaris of wealthy museum benefactors to new experiments in visual anthropology. By 1922 the museum had generated a circulating library of films, which were sent to schools and other non-profit groups free of charge.<sup>27</sup> The film mandate of the AMNH was explicitly educational and concentrated on subjects falling within the general goals of the museum itself, though it included others as well: anthropology, natural history, zoology, travelogues, and occasionally art films. The free and ready availability of these films—early on in 35mm format—encouraged the acquisition of 35mm projectors by schools and other museums, which most commonly were placed in their auditoriums. Nevertheless, equipment expense, fire laws, insurance, and the costs of hiring the required licensed projectionist remained factors that worked against the rapid spread of museum movie theaters. With the establishment of the 16mm standard, many of these problems were alleviated. Museums began more actively collecting and distributing 16mm prints. The AMNH rapidly acquired and lent titles printed on this gauge throughout the 1920s and 1930s. It obtained films from the U.S. Bureau of Mines, the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau, and industrial libraries, indicating an expanding image circuit. By 1937, more than 34,700 reels of film circulated per year, with 1,706 borrowers in forty-five states. This yielded an audience of 13,102,368 viewers who gathered at 80,532 showings, surely making the museum one of the largest nontheatrical film distributors in North America (figure 5).<sup>28</sup>

Films both augmented and sometimes wholly replaced other kinds of exhibits. For museums such as the Met, motion pictures were deemed an efficient way to extend conventional approaches to high art by reproducing well-established discourses on classical and Renaissance paintings and sculptures.<sup>29</sup> Much like the lantern slides and lectures that preceded them, through instructional films and films designed to display previously inaccessible works to a larger community, film lent mobility to art—translated as celluloid image—largely in the spirit of furthering bourgeois appreciation.<sup>30</sup> These traveling instructional kits continued and expanded a network of educational institutions throughout New York City and the eastern United States, which brought otherwise disconnected organizations into greater dialogue and coordination. The disembodied authority of the museum was indicated either by title sequences that marked the film with





FIGURE 5. Herman A. Sievers, senior messenger with motorcycle for quick delivery of slides, specimens, and films, American Museum of Natural History, 1922. Courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History Library.

the museum's insignia or through accompanying notes or lecturers.<sup>31</sup> In other words, the films served to extend the authority of the museum, bearing its imprimatur and carrying out its mandates. The impulse and the resources to orchestrate such programs are most evident in—though not wholly exclusive to—large urban museums, furthering the idea that the

modern museum was also the urban, the cosmopolitan, and the technologically mobile museum.

By the mid-1930s, American museums were benefiting from newly available sources of funding, which exacted considerable influence over their activities. Despite financial hardships brought on by the Great Depression, or perhaps because of them, unprecedented federal patronage, corporate contributions, and foundation grants resulted in overall increases in museum revenue.<sup>32</sup> Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, the economic policy designed to redress the problems of the Depression, had—among other things—turned the government into a powerful patron, commissioning art and facilitating its exhibition in both urban and rural areas. Several New Deal programs aided the arts, among them the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP), the Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP), and the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project (WPA/FAP). The largest amounts given to museums came from the WPA, which received \$19,833,228 out of \$69,578,055 allotted by the federal organization. This money was usually dedicated to creating jobs, thus supplying a pool of subsidized labor. This resulted in a dramatic increase in building decoration and mural painting, art historical research, encyclopedias of folk and regional art, art education programs, and other museum work.<sup>33</sup>

The 1920s and 1930s saw disproportionate growth in art museums over other kinds of museums, namely, science and history museums.<sup>34</sup> Under the New Deal, the number of institutions devoted to art increased by 15 percent. Many of the new museums were small institutions with modest budgets located throughout the American heartland, reflecting the greater emphasis on decentralized structures wherein rural and popular involvement with art and art education could be generated not just in major cities but also regionally and locally. This also provided institutional support for regional, American, and folk art. Additionally, 103 community art centers were built, many of which were in the southern and the western parts of the country, areas not rich in art museums. It is estimated that more than eight million people visited these art centers, which represents a considerable change in the size, shape, and expectations of the art-going community.<sup>35</sup> Changes to the Federal Revenue Act of 1935 allowed corporations to receive tax exemptions for charitable contributions of up to 5 percent of their pretax income. This ensured increased donations of money and art to museums and their programs.

Throughout the 1930s, art and museums enjoyed unprecedented attention and were granted new importance as active agents in quelling if not controlling the social unrest endemic to the troubled period. With elevated

government assistance being supplied to Americans denied basic levels of subsistence, foundations such as those undergirded by the Carnegie, Rockefeller, Mellon, and Kress fortunes shifted even more of their philanthropic activities from basic charity donations to cultural and educational programs. The availability of such funds for educational activities further encouraged museums to expand their activities in this direction. Public education and outreach became—at least temporarily—the dominant museological ethos. As a result, the American audience for art realized a concurrent and dramatic growth, as did the spaces in which art could be seen. The base of museum support expanded; its form and structure consequently changed. The project to civilize Americans through museums was reorganized around the face of a mobilized cultural network, composed of ostensibly edifying and educational exhibitions and activities, funded by a combination of public and private sources.<sup>36</sup>

American museums were also affected by the tenets of Progressivism, whose influential ideas about education reached their peak during the 1920s and 1930s. Commensurate with philanthropic patronage and supported by the Progressive education and adult education movements, the educational impetus long attached to American museums was increasingly foregrounded. This history of Progressive education is a complex one, constituted by a range of projects that sought to adapt American schools to the changing conditions of modern life primarily by using them as channels for training workers, Americanizing immigrants, and creating properly moral citizens. In other words, educating individuals was primarily understood as a project of controlled democracy, managing corporate excess on the one hand and containing cultural difference on the other. Like other organs of cultural life—museums, civic associations, libraries—schools were conceived as tools for creating a sturdy social fabric commensurate with such values. Because Progressivism was a vast and diverse movement that changed over time and encompassed everything from temperance to film criticism, care should be taken when considering its place in this discussion. Some Progressive organizations were sympathetic to the immigrant's plight, and others were not. Nevertheless, the ideas of John Dewey are particularly important for understanding Progressivism and its relationship to art education in the 1930s. Dewey rejected idealist philosophy and instead argued that ideas were necessarily linked to the social world of human action. In terms of learning, this implied that a child was a distinct individual and that formal education should be molded and personalized around goals of developing the whole child through experience or social action. Art was reconceived as a crucial element in the process.

Established in the early 1920s, the Progressive Education Association (PEA) formalized many of Dewey's ideas in a national institution. It favored the idea that a teacher was a guide and not a taskmaster, that children should be encouraged to use their personal interests to inform their work, and that classrooms were best thought of as experimental learning laboratories rather than routinized drill sites. The PEA pushed even further the place of the arts in school curricula, conceived as an experience conjoining the aesthetic with the whole child. While the emphasis of Progressive education changed significantly over its first thirty-five years, the 1930s saw the return of a Progressivism deeply concerned with social reform.<sup>37</sup>

Predictably, the Progressivist ethos overlapped markedly with museological projects. The class bias of both surely aided the collaboration. There was a marked increase of publications emphasizing the importance of museums for popular education. A range of journals and books circulated throughout this period, dedicated to adult education, visual education, and museum education. Some of these projects benefited from philanthropic support, most notably from the Carnegie Foundation, which invested heavily in adult education from the early 1920s.<sup>38</sup> For instance, the American Association for Adult Education (1926) published a series of widely available books, funded by the Carnegie Foundation, targeting adults. T. R. Adam wrote three of these works, *The Civic Value of Museums* (1937), *Museums and Popular Culture* (1939), and *Motion Pictures in Adult Education* (1940), each of which advocates the importance of media in forwarding accessible models for the museum conceived plainly as a popular exercise for enhancing civic life. These books are informed by the assertion that traditional methods of schooling endemic to established institutions possessed too narrow an approach to the challenge of sharing knowledge in a modern democracy. The "cultural field" was seen as a complement to the more direct "political sphere," and each was crucial for the self-improvement required for social betterment. Importantly, museums were increasingly seen as sites wherein cultural authority could be democratized. In these books, reorienting the museum was likened to monopolies previously held by church or state. As an enlivened educator, the newly egalitarian museum became an imaginative stage on which social inequities might be corrected and poverty relieved.

As much as the rhetoric attached to museums made the institution into a weapon of American individualism and democracy, it also crafted the museum as a defense against the uncertainties set loose by modern life. These uncertainties were not only economic; they were also indicated by major paradigms of modern thought. For instance, the important yet

destabilizing ideas of thinkers such as Copernicus, Darwin, and Marx and artists such as Salvador Dalí are named explicitly in Adam's books as forces that can be accommodated only within solid, stable community structures, composed of educated individuals. Adam argued unapologetically that the museum had a vital role to play in shaping cultural life; its clear purpose was "to find the proper instruments to adapt men to their changing environment."<sup>39</sup> According to him, a museum was not a show-place for rare art objects but a place integrated around community values. Fostering the exchange of artistic and intellectual culture should be its emphasis; inducing reverence should not. The museum, Adam argued, should be an engaged site, situating art within a wider matrix of social action, rejecting wholeheartedly the distinction between fine and applied arts. Rather than a solemn Sunday ritual, Adam hoped that attending a museum might be seen as an "intellectual sport," a place that might stimulate a "mass audience."<sup>40</sup>

By no means entirely accepted by the museum establishment, these views did have several important implications for how the art museum, in particular, would change and adapt. Throughout the 1930s, art museums exercised a renewed commitment to outreach and education. Art was, in an explicit way, mobilized for the betterment of a more democratic civic life. Some of the museum's basic curatorial practices were thus affected. For instance, Adam argued that rather than simply conceiving of their spaces as sites for permanent exhibits, museums should fully adopt the principles of the temporary exhibit, which for him provided a more compelling model for museum activities. Part of improving the status and relevance of museums in everyday or popular life involved instilling in potential patrons the idea that their exhibits were always changing, partly to invite more frequent visitation and partly to expand the kinds of visitors by diversifying the objects on display. In fact, a new model of constantly changing programs was forwarded, implicitly indexing the flux of modern life generally. Unsurprisingly, the ceaseless, seamless, and vital flow of the movie theater was named specifically as the new model for the new museum. According to Adam, "The ideal at which many directors now aim is to persuade a large section of the public to regard their art museum somewhat as they would a motion picture theater. If the habit of regular attendance is once acquired, visitors look forward eagerly to a change of exhibition and keep themselves informed of the museum's programs."<sup>41</sup>

The temporary exhibit, like the changing programs of the movie theater, was seen as a method by which a public's attention could be continually captured and sustained. In other words, "what's playing" or "what's

on" might be asked of the museum just as it might be asked of radio or film. This would also allow greater flexibility in planning exhibits that reflected current events and shifting fashions. It would further enable museums to fit more readily into the mediated flows of daily life, the seasons, and the fashion cycle, such that the institution's content would always appear new and hence would become news. Giving the museum something new to say, something unusual to report, or something of interest to catch the distracted eye of the public was considered a method by which to adapt the museum to rapidly changing, mediated environments where the continual flow of discrete images and objects was increasingly central to the organization of cultural life.

This concern for inserting the museum into the ephemeral dialogues that characterize modernity took many forms. Film screenings became a regular element of museum programming. Museum educators collaborated with local radio stations, orchestrating regular broadcasts of lectures and discussions, which were sometimes accompanied by prepackaged slide shows or print reproductions that were sent to schools or clubs. These radio shows were also occasionally paired with reproductions published in newspapers. Chicago's *Daily News* referred to these shows as "radio photologues," and the *Buffalo Courier Express* called them "Roto-Radio Talks." Listeners would be directed to look at particular images as the broadcast unfolded, with sound effects complementing the images, such as jungle noises added to images of wild animals.<sup>42</sup> A new form of virtual museological curation was effected, coordinating airwaves, newspapers, museums, and a geographically expanded audience. These experiments also accompanied reproductions of artworks, placed on photo pages. Sometimes these images occupied the whole page; at other times they would be accompanied by bathing beauties, images of coronations, and other news events. Throughout the 1930s, these experiments evolved into regular art and museum newspaper columns, recurring art and museum radio shows, and the continued reproduction of art in newspapers and women's magazines (figure 6).

The temporary exhibit, as well as collaborations with radio and newspapers, further spurred the larger program of traveling or circulating exhibits, which could be seen in vacant store windows, school buildings, and subway passages. Also important was the rise of museum publications such as bulletins, magazines, and leaflets, which were increasingly written in clear, accessible language rather than presented as specialized research documents or reports.<sup>43</sup> In their structural organization and content, museums were no longer only sacral, unchanging sites but also protean, motion-bound entities, sprawling in their shape and activities.



FIGURE 6. Dr. Roy Chapman Andrews at the microphone, *CBS School of the Air*, broadcast from the American Museum of Natural History, October 20, 1938. Courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History Library.

#### ALFRED BARR AND MODERN ART

In the United States, emergent models for the art museum are related to—though distinct from—ideas about modern art, which were only slowly gaining visibility in the conservative outposts of American universities and established museums. On the whole, the academic study of art history abided by traditionalist models of examining the great works of long-dead European painters and sculptors. Alfred Barr sought to change this. Schooled in art history at Princeton and Harvard, Barr was influenced by the then-unusual ideas of Charles Rufus Morey, a medievalist at Princeton’s art history department. Morey’s classes demonstrated an inclusive approach to medieval art by addressing a range of aesthetic objects, including illumination, wall painting, sculpture, architecture, handicrafts, and folk art. Barr was impressed by the possibilities of this unconventional approach for understanding both the past and the present of art, persuaded that all visual forms of an era were relevant for exploring aesthetic change

synchronically and diachronically. This insight provided Barr with his first, foundational assumptions regarding museological practice, manifested only a few years later at MoMA: the history of art is best understood as a cross-pollination of all aesthetic forms native to a period, including folk art as well as everyday and commercial objects. Art need not necessarily subscribe to ahistorical conceptions of reverential or representational beauty. Art might also be useful, or at least be understood as a dialogue among things considered more properly creative and those considered more strictly utilitarian. Integrating this perspective with the challenges of modern art in modern times, Barr's concept of art history entailed a vast and complex movement whose products could be found across political and national borders, across identifiable aesthetic movements, and, crucially, among the complex interactions of the machine and the human.

Before his arrival at MoMA in 1929, Barr taught art history courses at Wellesley College. Through these courses he was able to experiment not only with his ideas about the history of art but also with his ideas about teaching this history. In doing so, he adopted unorthodox pedagogical methods. Because of his conviction that art was an organic, cross-pollination of forms that changed with sociohistorical configurations, Barr readily acknowledged the wide range of modern influences on contemporary aesthetic formations and critical practices considered art by more conventional definitions. Drawing on the ascendance of little magazines as well as mass-circulation magazines, Barr openly admitted to being influenced by publications as different as the *Dial* and *Vanity Fair*.<sup>44</sup> In order to enact a pedagogical style that accommodated his predisposition, Barr gathered course material from unlikely places, ranging from dime stores to glossy advertisements; he was hindered by neither the plebian nor the prosaic sources from which they came. When teaching what Irving Sandler has determined to be the first course ever offered on modern art in America,<sup>45</sup> Barr examined posters, advertising, architecture, avant-garde and documentary film, and theater. He invoked a wide variety of examples in class, including a wedding announcement designed by Herbert Bayer at the Bauhaus, a bookcase resembling a skyscraper, American Indian masks, fashion drawings from Marshall Field's department store, and photographs by Paul Strand, Edward Steichen, Lyonel Fieninger, and Man Ray. Barr further encouraged students to study the forms of their everyday worlds, inviting them to consider factory buildings, commercial films, Victrola records, automobiles, and refrigerators.<sup>46</sup> Suddenly art was everywhere and no longer confined to dusty, foreboding art museums or to the imaginary domains of faraway, extinct traditions touted by the American establishment.



In keeping with the times, Barr actively proselytized his beliefs. Unafraid of mass media, he eagerly used them to forward his ideas about modern art, considering himself to be a mass educator as well as a scholar. An early example of this approach was the publication in *Vanity Fair* of a questionnaire he used in his courses at Wellesley, entitled simply "A Modern Art Questionnaire." Fifty questions invited the participant to access a remarkable range of aesthetic knowledge derived from contemporary movements in architecture, sculpture, painting, graphic arts, music, prose, drama, poetry, theater, film, photography, and commercial arts, emanating from American, German, Italian, Russian, French, and British origins.<sup>47</sup> Specific subjects included George Gershwin, Henri Matisse, Gilbert Seldes, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, surrealism, the German film studio Universum-Film Aktiengesellschaft (UFA), Alfred Stieglitz, and Saks Fifth Avenue.<sup>48</sup>

MoMA opened on November 7, 1929, ten days after the stock market crash that signaled the end of interwar prosperity and the beginning of the Great Depression. The museum was established at the behest of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, Lillie P. Bliss, and Mary Quinn Sullivan. Dubbed "the ladies," all three were devotees of the arts. Rockefeller and Bliss were endowed with considerable fortunes, which facilitated their acquisitions. Sullivan was a teacher of art who traveled extensively throughout Europe largely to be closer to the scene in which modernism was unfolding. Sullivan and Bliss had both been heavily influenced by the famed Armory Show of 1913, buying paintings and, henceforward, taking an active interest in all things modern. All three had growing modern collections. America, they decided, needed a museum in which such works could be properly exhibited and appreciated. Thus, the first American modern art museum was born—a privately endowed institution with an ostensibly public mandate. Criticized early on as a playground for the rich, it was simultaneously celebrated for its bold expansion of American aesthetic sensibilities. Through their connections, bolstered by a series of salons, luncheons, and afternoon teas, "the ladies" built a formidable team. Alfred Barr was at its helm.<sup>49</sup>

When the museum first announced its formation, public statements proclaimed its allegiance to the new museological model discussed earlier in this chapter. It became an exhibitionary site firmly situated within what was happening in art, nationally and internationally. The first press release differentiated the MoMA experiment from other American museums, notably the Met, describing the latter as a great historical museum. MoMA was committed to the new, the transitory, the living. Moreover, MoMA closely aligned itself with European museum trends. Berlin, Paris, and London had each recently committed resources to building companion spaces

that housed new art alongside their traditional repositories. In other words, MoMA combined the new of modern art with the new of the mass museum, forming what would become a hybrid space with permanent and temporary galleries filled with old and new works.<sup>50</sup>

Coincident and resonant with Barr's cross-formal approach to art history and art education were other movements under way in Europe that sought to integrate art, artists, and contemporary life into intellectually charged and socially relevant configurations that challenged the dominant bourgeois model of art-as-salon. The most marked of these influences on Barr was that of the Bauhaus, established in Germany in 1919 and disbanded in 1933 with Hitler's ascension to power.<sup>51</sup> Barr visited the Bauhaus in Dessau in December 1927, meeting with Walter Gropius, László Moholy-Nagy, Wassily Kandinsky, Oskar Schlemmer, Marcel Breuer, Paul Klee, and others.<sup>52</sup>

Barr's appreciation and application of Bauhausian principles to his own undertakings reflect fidelity to the school's official purpose as articulated in its first formal statement, the "Bauhaus Manifesto." Walter Gropius, the school's first director, outlined a program that encouraged recognition of the composite character of art—its "architectonic spirit"—which is lost, he claimed, when it becomes merely a bourgeois salon art. He asserted that artists of all media must work together to embrace the application of their creativity and to forge a productive intellectual and material dialectic between form and function: "Let us then create a new guild of craftsman and artist! Together let us desire, conceive and create the new structure of the future, which will embrace architecture and sculpture and painting in one unity and which will one day rise towards heaven from the hands of a million workers like the crystal symbol of a new faith."<sup>53</sup> The Bauhaus was a utopian experiment in forging unforeseen relations among artists, means, and methods. Explicit engagement with the sociopolitical world was paramount. The school's concerns, therefore, naturally came to include industrial design, graphic arts, stage design, photography, and, important for this discussion, film.

The Bauhaus model impressed Barr. Its pursuit of the interrelations between fine and applied art and between abstract and functional art, its heralding of a future-oriented utopianism, its integration of modern conditions and technologies into aesthetic practice, and its idea that the artist was a "vital participant" all struck Barr as compelling. They are clearly manifest in Barr's multidepartmental plans for MoMA and, in particular, in his conviction that new technological forms occupied an important place in the unraveling world of modern art.<sup>54</sup> It is difficult to determine how the

Marxist undertones of the project or the affiliations of its members with the Communist Party influenced Barr. He focused largely on unadulterated, vigorous explorations of form and function, machine and human, rather than on the more material conditions under which such explorations might be conducted.<sup>55</sup> While he surely understood that experiments such as those of the Bauhaus were inspired by various social and political visions, his writings do not reflect sustained attention to such matters.

While Barr expressed clear interest in contemporary vanguard intellectual and aesthetic experiments, he was equally interested in the relationship of the museum to these experiments. In other words, how could the spirit of an art institutional experiment such as the Bauhaus be translated into an American museum of art?<sup>56</sup> The basic model upon which the museum's activities were to be based was outlined in a 1932 pamphlet, written by Alfred Barr, entitled *The Public as Artist*. Designed to attract new museum members, this publication neatly summarized a range of museum aims. Echoing assertions discussed earlier in adult education literature, the pamphlet begins with the claim that "art is the joint creation of artist and public"; without the public, "art is stillborn" and will always fail to achieve its ideal form as "living art."<sup>57</sup> Barr conceived of the museum's ideal public as an engaged one whose contributions to dialogue and criticism were as important as the interventions of any given artist or piece of art. Supplying the germane interface between the public and the work was the museum, conceived as a living space, filled with the art of established masters as well as with the art of contemporary artists, from America and elsewhere. Its official aims were (1) "to bring about a sound and widespread understanding of modern art by impartial presentation"; (2) "to raise the level of art appreciation throughout the country"; (3) "to encourage living artists by exhibiting their work"; and (4) "to promote international understanding through art."<sup>58</sup> Circulating exhibitions were accorded great prominence among the museum's goals. The museum also announced plans to organize a library of art books, to publish and circulate catalogues, and to gradually incorporate prints, architecture, photography, and motion pictures. It hosted art classes organized by schools, colleges, and universities. MoMA also announced special discounted membership rates for students and teachers.

Barr believed that both the scholar and the museum played an important role in the art world. The scholar elucidated the history of particular art movements, demonstrated links between and across artistic modes, and contributed to differentiating quality from mediocrity. The museum ide-

ally became a site for the broader dialogue among critic, collector, artist, and public by making art and information about art more accessible and visible. It was not a place in which art died. The museum should be, Barr contended, part of the living dialogue, popular and specialized. By asserting this, Barr hoped to rejuvenate and update traditional conceptions of art, believing that the category *art* was best understood as a dynamic, changing, and challenging set of ideas and practices—propagated by critics, museums and galleries, artists and mass media—through which forms high and low, new and old interacted. His interest in history combined with a concern for the novel, suggesting that the museum should function as what Kevin Sandler has called a “vast storehouse of ideas.”<sup>59</sup> MoMA thus served early on as both a *Kunsthalle*, exhibiting the latest works, and a *Kunstmuseum*, exhibiting a permanent collection. It also resonated with the calls in American museum culture to update and make more agile curatorial and educational programming.

Barr wanted MoMA to provide a site from which living artists and critics could draw to create, renew, and challenge assumptions about aesthetic form, content, history, and, of course, institutions. Rather than upholding a collection as a simple reflection of the great and readily accepted achievements of the past, MoMA also considered the novel and the challenging. This implied a new set of relations between living artists and art institutions, offering more than ever before a museum site from which contemporary artists were more likely to benefit and against whose values and practices they were more likely to protest.<sup>60</sup> It was also a site that fit neatly with the idea that culture was always happening—in the pages of newspapers and magazines, on subway walls and posters, and at the museum itself.<sup>61</sup> In short, MoMA displayed both conventional and unconventional art in both conventional and unconventional places. A priceless Van Gogh would hang on the museum wall, be reproduced in a daily newspaper, and appear in department store window displays. Machine parts and kitchen appliances were similarly presented.

Throughout MoMA's first decade, its organizational structure and activities clearly demonstrate the museum's strong relationship to contemporary practices and debates concerning the value of art, the purpose of the museum, and the place of mass media within cultural endeavors ordained as respectable by the cultural elite and embraced by the powerful middle classes. MoMA effectively combined the aesthetic experiments under way in Europe with the ascendant educationalist ethos of the American museum. Indeed, from 1929 to 1939, MoMA cleared a path for large American art museums that was distinct and undeniably prescient:

it embraced the practices of corporate marketing and advertising; it actively coordinated and advocated for its aesthetic hierarchies and European inclinations through newspapers, magazines, films, radio, and television; it solicited public opinion through surveys and questionnaires; and it courted American industry and flirted with consumer culture. The museum was no longer a simple fortress, protecting precious relics and commanding determined devotees. It was a rational business enterprise, a store window, and a national cultural force, entering living rooms daily through a spiderweb of mediated messages.

MoMA's relations with mass media and consumer culture ran as deep as the pockets of its board of trustees and stretched as far as CBS's radio waves, permeating its administrative as well as its publicity work. The board was filled not only with members of the American elite whose fortunes were built on steel, oil, and banking, a reasonably common fact of New York museum life, but also with a considerable number of members from fortunes built directly on consumer goods and mass media: Marshall Field (son of the founder of Marshall Field's department stores); Edsel Ford (son of Henry Ford); William Paley (founder of CBS); Henry Luce (founder of *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune* magazines); Walt Disney (independent producer and animator); and John Hay Whitney (cofounder with David O. Selznick of Selznick International Pictures, founder of Pioneer Pictures, investor in Technicolor).<sup>62</sup> Frank Crowninshield, editor of *Vanity Fair*, served as secretary of the museum's first organizing committee. Shortly after the museum was founded, Alfred Barr hired an expert in the field of public relations to develop strategies for membership drives and fundraising. In 1932, he hired a full-time publicist for the museum's activities, creating one of the first in-house publicity departments in an American museum.<sup>63</sup>

Mirroring Barr's earlier forays into the popular and literary press, MoMA's public image was aided by an astute use of the new cosmopolitanism ascendant in major cities, evident in the frequent displays of modern art in department store windows and in the pages of mass-circulation magazines such as *Time*, *Life*, *Vogue*, *Vanity Fair*, *Newsweek*, and the *New Yorker*, as well as the growing body of women's magazines such as *House & Garden*.<sup>64</sup> MoMA's exhibits and other activities appeared and were discussed frequently in these publications. The museum's public relations officer managed and monitored these efforts, ensuring not only that the museum would have a visible public presence but also that it would thrive because of it. The most famous of MoMA's publicity successes occurred in conjunction with the enormously popular van Gogh exhibition of 1935,

during which ladies' dresses in van Gogh shades of blue and gold were displayed in Fifth Avenue storefronts, with reproductions of his paintings providing the backdrop. The artist's sunflowers became the season's hot style for shower curtains, scarves, tablecloths, bath mats, and ashtrays. Previous attendance records were shattered. The popular and middlebrow media fawned over the exhibit.<sup>65</sup> Collectively, projects to expand the museum and ensure its daily presence across the country yielded remarkable success. For instance, the annual report issued in 1940 announced that in the previous year, news and comments about the museum were published in an average of 239 newspapers and 24 magazines each month, with an average of 462 articles per month. During this year alone the museum broadcast eleven radio shows and television programs.<sup>66</sup> As a point of comparison, it has been estimated that throughout this period MoMA's publicity amounted to ten times more mentions in the press than appeared for any other American museum.<sup>67</sup>

The dynamism of MoMA's early museum exhibitions is remarkable and can be read both as a manifestation of the ongoing disagreement concerning acquisition and exhibition practices among the museum's supporters and as a sign of the museum's ambivalent relationship to its as yet unsettled public. Even a cursory glance at the museum's exhibitions of the 1930s, a period characterized by one observer as a "process of experimentation, of trial and error," reveals a program of extreme diversity.<sup>68</sup> Exhibits were dedicated to single artists of varying aesthetic, social, and political dispositions, including Diego Rivera (1931), Vincent van Gogh (1935), Fernand Léger (1935), Pablo Picasso (1939), and Walker Evans (1933); to art movements, bearing titles such as American Painting and Sculpture, 1862–1932 (1932), Cubism and Abstract Art (1936), Fantastic Art, Dada, and Surrealism (1936), and Bauhaus, 1919–1928 (1938); and to special theme shows featuring objects ranging from toasters to townhouses, with such titles as Useful Household Objects under \$5 (1938), Machine Art (1934), The Town of Tomorrow (1937), and The Making of a Contemporary Film (1937).<sup>69</sup> Some of these shows included sections from each of the museum's departments. Both the Cubism and Abstract Art and the Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism shows were multidepartmental in their curation, including examples of architecture, posters, typography, photography, films, furniture, and theater.<sup>70</sup> In other words, the tensions inherent in MoMA's debates about what constitutes "art" and, therefore, what constitutes proper museum practice resulted in an innovative and active exhibition schedule, involving a wide range of art objects from a diverse range of aesthetic and political movements.

Barr's interest in art education conjoined with the museological spirit of the day and ensured MoMA's active role in forwarding public education through circulating exhibitions and curatorial experiments involving media. Barr also established new protocols for displaying art inside the museum; paintings were mounted at a considerable distance from each other, accompanied by clearly written and researched information placards, hung at eye level according to sociohistorical or aesthetic affinity rather than salon style—clustered, hung in vertical rows or by frame size.<sup>71</sup> In addition to a wide range of objects in MoMA's main galleries, architectural drawings, photographs, and models, objects of industrial design and domestic use, and select modern paintings (most often reproductions) could be found in an increasing number of everyday places. MoMA's circulating programs, initiated in 1931 and granted their own permanent department in 1933, were sent to schools, libraries, department stores, ladies clubs, and other museums.<sup>72</sup> Such programs, derived from exhibits initially designed for the primary museum site, included architecture, paintings, photography, design, and eventually films. Throughout the decade, they became more elaborate and grew to include discussion guides, informational pamphlets, and visual aids. By 1940, an average of one circulating program was sent out every day, fortifying the museum's presence throughout the country.<sup>73</sup>

In the 1930s, MoMA was clearly embroiled in an institutional debate about how to draw the boundaries of museum activity. Despite the fact that popular education appeared in the very first museum announcements, its institutionalization and actualization was by no means a simple or settled matter. Museum officials continued to identify two key questions for themselves: whether the museum should confine its interests strictly to the business of exhibiting objects of fine art or whether it should extend its sphere of activities to include popular educational programming beyond the museum's main site. Barr consistently took a strong stance on this question and unapologetically embraced mass museology. As early as 1933, he argued that the radio and docent talks be given their own departmental status, alongside extension programs, publicity, and slides and photography. The mobility and adaptability of MoMA's exhibits were as important as disseminating talk about them. Interfacing with various publics—local and national—was paramount. Against those who preferred an elite and sacral museum, Barr declared that extending museum programming through popular instruction and mass media need not imply compromising quality or erudition. He did concede, however, that in practice the museum's activities had swung too far in favor of what he termed

a “distribution” mentality rather than a “production” mentality. That is, he argued that the museum had allowed popular education—circulating exhibitions, publicity, radio—to overdetermine its “productive” tasks, its curatorial and conceptual work. The result, Barr argued, was that the intellectual project of the museum had been unnecessarily compromised. In short, Barr sought a kind of middle ground. He worked hard to dissociate his position from both a “theoretical” (i.e., academic and elite) taint and a populist one, offering instead a vision of the museum as a provider of widely disseminated quality content. He dubbed this thoroughly practical. Aware of his audience, he encouraged trustees to think of the museum as a business that needed to be built with the security of a superior rather than an inferior product. According to Barr, any successful business needed a good product first. Distribution would then follow. He proclaimed: “An exhibition should not be considered first for its ‘popular’ appeal. It should be judged on its intrinsic merits. Whether or not it can be satisfactorily distributed is a separate matter.”<sup>74</sup> Barr’s criteria hinged more on ideals of formal innovation and originality as properties inherent to the art object but linked these properties to an expanding network of technologically mediated publics.<sup>75</sup>

The debate about the museum’s relationship to popular education and its relationship to what Barr described as “theoretical” and “productive” continued throughout this decade. A study commissioned in 1937 under Barr’s directorship with the support of Nelson Rockefeller argued—apparently contra Barr—that the museum had swung too far away from the needs of a wide audience; a distinct department needed to be organized that dealt directly and specifically with the essential role of popular education. The two goals were carefully conceived as complementary rather than mutually exclusive. In this report, Artemas Packard—whom Barr personally hired—argued that overattention to the fine arts had stunted the thinking of American art museums in general. MoMA’s work, in particular, Packard asserted, had failed to recognize the fundamental irrelevance of fine art to the great number of working Americans. The great failure of its exhibits was that they diverted attention away from the aesthetic richness of everyday phenomena such as religion, sports, “social intercourse,” gardening, business, and even tinkering with automobiles.<sup>76</sup> As Packard wrote:

Our commendable (if somewhat pathetic and exaggerated) concern for the “fine arts” has prevented us from realizing that *art can occupy a central place in the life of the modern world only insofar as it can be applied to the things the majority of people are intimately aware of*



*and by according it in these associations the same dignity and respect to which it is supposed to be entitled in its less plebian manifestations. The aesthetic consciousness of the American public is desperately befuddled by the false sentimentality and snobbism which, in the name of "art," exalts a bad etching hanging in the parlor above a first-rate sauce pan in the kitchen.*<sup>77</sup>

Packard's report continued:

*For all that the schools and museums have done in that direction appears hopelessly roundabout and futile in the face of the overwhelming direct influence on the public taste exercised by the cinema, the radio, the department store, the mail order catalogue, and the popular press. Our tactics have savored too long on rear-guard action. . . . Our greatest hope of success lies in a head-on attack upon those forces which chiefly condition the public taste. And they are most vulnerable precisely where most people spend most of their money: namely in whatever affects the marketability of objects produced to satisfy the ordinary requirements of daily life.*<sup>78</sup>

He concluded by suggesting that if the museum trustees wanted MoMA to succeed, the full power of the media had to be embraced. This would provide the means by which the judgments and taste the museum sanctioned would achieve lasting influence on popular thinking. Packard unapologetically linked art to the means and methods of consumer culture, effectively arguing that the museum-as-site was largely inconsequential in the larger project of proselytizing the new and more expansive understanding of good taste, now necessarily including everyday objects, consumer culture, and mass media.<sup>79</sup>

The Packard report led directly to the hiring of Victor D'Amico, who quickly expanded the museum's experimental educational programs. The first of these were coordinated with local private schools that had adopted Progressive principles and involved circulating exhibits, programs for educating teachers, and art demonstrations for students. The Young People's Gallery, which displayed art by and for children, was established in 1939 and gained permanent museum space in 1941.<sup>80</sup> MoMA's Department of Education was officially established in 1951.<sup>81</sup> Formalizing an educationalist ethos ensured sustained commitment to museum outreach, yet it also concretized the hierarchy between the serious and the popular, the properly artistic and the educational, within the museum's structure. To summarize, the hierarchy between what Barr called "distribution" and "production" or what Packard called "popular education" and "fine art" was

conceptually and institutionally resolved by creating a department whose task it was to develop and execute educational activities. In other words, “popular education” was seen as one very distinct part of the museum’s more important scholarly whole. The Department of Circulating Exhibits (1933) and the Department of Education were identifiably separate from the official curatorial practices of the other museum departments. In practice, MoMA struggled with these two ostensibly antithetical tasks. Despite the emergence of departments dedicated to education, publicity, and circulating exhibitions, administrators and curators all continued to either explicitly or implicitly wrestle with the problem.<sup>82</sup>

The tension between scholarship and popular education played out through many of MoMA’s activities and was often brokered by the museum’s multilevel integration of media technologies into its basic organization and operation. The embrace of mass media, celebrated by Packard, ushered in some other basic shifts. One important result was the reaffirmation of what I am calling *mass museology*. MoMA continued to use varied media in its active efforts to insert the museum and its art into the flow of modern life. It also sought to shape that flow by transforming it into an edifying aesthetic experience, using the modern art museum and its holdings as the method. New modes of exhibition emerged as MoMA established unusual sites for thinking through the place of modern art in modern life. For instance, in 1937 the museum was preparing to move into its third permanent site in its short ten-year life. The Rockefeller townhouse at 11 West Fifty-third Street, occupied since 1932, was to be torn down, making way for the new building designed by Philip Goodwin and Edward Stone. A monument to the International Style, the landmark building served as the museum’s home from 1939 until its 2004 makeover. This two-year displacement encouraged some innovative curatorial practice. Midway through 1937, the museum began to exhibit art in the concourse level of the Rockefeller Center complex, a corridor through which thousands of people passed daily.

In a press release, entitled “Art through the Window,” MoMA announced this show, describing the comparative pedagogical strategy that underpinned it. The show displayed similar objects, rendered in contrasting traditional and modern styles. The objects sat side by side so that the distinctiveness of each might be highlighted and therefore better understood. Commuters and other passersby were encouraged to observe and think about differences made apparent by exhibited objects, such as those between the conceptual and perceptual, abstract and specific, machine and hu-

man, idealistic and realistic.<sup>83</sup> Other more generic exhibitions of the museum's collections were displayed in similarly busy and ephemeral sites, including department stores and movie theaters. During the first five years in which the museum enacted such exhibits, forty-three traveling exhibitions were shown 448 times in 142 cities across the United States and Canada. Similar to the ethos of the portable newspaper and the middle-brow magazine, MoMA sought to literally combine its museological pedagogy with the transitory spaces of urban life, making even urban travel a potential tool in the modern arsenal of uplift.<sup>84</sup>

The use of modern media also affected the basic structure of museum operations. Fashioning itself as a national institution from very early on, MoMA worked to establish and maintain relationships with an inner circle of museum members, as well as the public at large. Branch offices or museum member groups were established across the country. Press releases boasted that MoMA was anything but a local institution. Nearly half of the museum's members lived more than seventy-five miles away from New York City. Membership groups existed in Buffalo, Chicago, Detroit, Louisville, Minneapolis, Palm Beach, Princeton, and so on. Such groups participated in an imagined museum community, sustained by discussion groups, museum bulletins, catalogues, and regular invitations to openings. Member groups were also a key part of MoMA's distribution plans, organizing venues for its traveling exhibits.<sup>85</sup> Extended membership also combined with the ethos of reproduction and retail promotions to further fortify the museum's presence. MoMA offered free color prints based on paintings in the permanent collection, the first of which was the well-known *Woman in White* by Picasso. Copies of these artworks were given to every museum member at no charge.<sup>86</sup>

Such art giveaways bore a strong resemblance to the product giveaways practiced by department stores, movie theaters, and public fairs. They were complemented by other activities that blurred the lines between consumer culture and art by marketing mass-produced by-products well suited to modern means of communication. Widely distributed catalogues featured reproductions of the museum's paintings, its design objects were proudly displayed by cooperating department stores, and schemes were hatched early on to market the cachet of seeing popular movies in an art museum, such as the prescient 1940 plan to issue film stills as postcards that could be purchased as collectibles, souvenirs, or sent as messages by mail.<sup>87</sup> Such examples further underscore the integral place of consumerist models for museum operations, as well as the functional ease with which high art

was able to use the channels of low culture, often without perceived threat to its value.

It is also important to note here the impact of new technologies and practices of art reproduction, which allowed select images to circulate widely, rapidly, and daily. In effect, much like Benjamin's edict—more a retrospective comment than a futurist speculation—the *mechanical* reproducibility of art was merging with the *electronic* reproducibility of art; the conditions in which art was circulated and seen had been fundamentally transformed. Museums played a key role in this paradigmatic shift. The material politic of these changes might seem quite mundane. For traveling exhibitions, cheap reproductions reduced shipping costs, insurance costs, damage risk, preservation costs, and security problems. With regard to postcards, magazines, and newspapers, MoMA participated in a long-standing economy of image circulation, one that further rearticulated art's as well as the museum's relationship to technology, mass culture, and capitalism. Museum-sanctioned reproductions might be found not only on the museum's walls but also mounted next to a grocery list in someone's home, with banal salutations scribbled on its back, or perhaps in a newspaper on a crowded subway.

The logic of the circulating exhibition and the active solicitation of public and popular engagement outlined here are most prominent in the strategies MoMA adopted in its public relations campaigns. In addition to regular press releases and illustrated articles about the museum, other promotional strategies were used that typify the publicity tactics more conventionally employed by discount department stores and sites of popular leisure. The museum hosted regular contests and events in which the public was invited to participate. Museumgoers and expert panels voted on their favorite exhibited objects (figure 7). Children's art contests were held and poster competitions conducted; artists were invited to render news events as images for mass-circulation photone newspapers.<sup>88</sup> One such event was held in 1937, when the museum initiated a dialogue and exhibition about the importance of "subway art." An early example of public installation art, subway art was specifically designed to decorate mass urban travel routes. Experts conducted discussions about its benefits to the commuter; radio shows explored its potential; MoMA polled the public to ascertain what form the art might take. MoMA's survey conceded that the public preferred "landscapes and country scenes," "New York City scenes," and "historical episodes" over "abstract decorations" by a margin of more than eight to one.<sup>89</sup>



FIGURE 7. Amelia Earhart, John Dewey, and Dr. Charles R. Richards announce winning objects for the Machine Art Show, 1934. Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

#### THE FILM LIBRARY EMERGES

Thus far I have shown that MoMA readily embraced the means of mass culture to disseminate its own version of the pedagogical and properly modern, as well as to extend the very architecture of the museum itself. It is equally important to consider here what MoMA's museology implied more specifically for the emerging generation of mechanical and industrial modes of expression taken to be distinct aesthetic expressions unto themselves. Film, photography, design, industrial art, and advertising were all participant in American consumer culture, bearing ambivalent and sometimes antagonistic relationships to traditional and dominant conceptions of fine art. On the one hand, if such objects were to benefit from and contribute to museological resources as aesthetically significant *objets d'art*, they would be forced to compete with models of creative genius, authenticity, and monetary value in which there was little place for technology, mass marketability, popularity, or utility. On the other hand, such media fit readily within the emerging museum model, inextricably linked as they were to everyday life and to the ascendant logic of accessibility, experiential art, and mass museology.

The basic fact of MoMA's institutional accommodation of industrial and technological forms as distinct arts, as opposed to instrumental institutional tools, owes much to Barr's determined efforts to expand the trustees' preferences beyond painting and sculpture.<sup>90</sup> As director, Barr already had a complex relationship to modern art, to art history, and to contemporary museums; and this relationship became further complicated by negotiations with MoMA's trustees about the other media relevant to modern art. Despite what was in some ways a progressive or at least an antitraditional approach to what kinds of media and objects might constitute art, Barr himself shared the Eurocentric bias of many American elites. Yet his taste broke boldly with the almost exclusive emphasis in American museums and art history departments on the work of great dead European artists. He unapologetically favored the new arts emanating from European circles—impressionism, cubism, Dadaism, surrealism, and constructivism. Much of this art implicitly or explicitly contravened traditional bourgeois models prescribing what art should be; some of it embraced the means and methods of mass cultural forms.<sup>91</sup> Despite its European origin, the unconventional and often challenging nature of this art did not always sit well with those who constituted established American art circles. Many were skeptical, and some were outraged by Barr's provocations.<sup>92</sup> Complicating the rift in the museum between its educationalist and its "productive" interests were tensions related precisely to media technologies. During these early years, this crucial tension persisted. Debates about American versus European art, and about modern art versus Renaissance or classical art shared the stage with disagreements over modern versus traditional media. When MoMA was founded, its trustees told Barr that departments such as photography, industrial design, and film would have to be "indefinitely postponed," partly due to the uncertainty of the museum's general viability, partly because of the economic depression, and partly out of disinterest.<sup>93</sup> Many of the trustees unapologetically favored sculpture and painting. Throughout the years, Barr argued determinedly for other modern forms.<sup>94</sup> Eventually the institution yielded. Architecture came first, with a permanent department being established in 1932. Film was next.

Barr felt great affinity for organizations such as cine clubs and film societies, which had formed in Paris, London, and elsewhere to exhibit and discuss films that were difficult to see in commercial cinemas. His travels in Europe had exposed him to these groups, to the Bauhaus, and also to the works of Sergei Eisenstein in Moscow (in 1928) and to the bold ideas of Joseph Goebbels in Germany (in 1933).<sup>95</sup> His writings about these experiences indicate enthusiasm for formal film experimentation, dismissive

skepticism regarding American film culture, and deep concern for the emerging role of the state in managing creative production and controlling artistic freedom. He was also deeply impressed by Eisenstein's ideas and his films, calling *The Battleship Potemkin* (1926) "epoch making."<sup>96</sup> Eisenstein further treated Barr and his traveling companion and colleague Jere Abbott to private screenings of footage from the then-incomplete *October* (1928) and *The General Line* (1929). Barr was also struck by Vsevolod Pudovkin's *End of St. Petersburg* (1927), which he deemed "marvelously photographed and directed," its propaganda themes giving it "dignity and punch."<sup>97</sup>

Barr was moved by Eisenstein's work and unsettled by his ongoing struggle with Soviet systems of censorship that functioned so much differently than those in America. Barr mused that whereas Eisenstein would not be censored in America, he would surely find "timidity," "vulgarity," and "prudery," as well as "severe temptation to cheapen his art."<sup>98</sup> While Barr acknowledged that one system was not necessarily better or more highly evolved than the other, he nonetheless made flippant comments about American films and the corporate and moral interests in which they were so fully embroiled. Inclined to overgeneralization, his comments reflect a chauvinistic anti-Americanism that resonates with his general Eurocentric leanings and with the emerging critique of mass culture, as well as distaste for the censorship exercised by such organizations as the Hays Office, by that office's Production Code, and by groups such as the Catholic Legion of Decency. Barr reduced American film to the "usual commercial manipulation . . . of super-slap-stick and the too-eternal triangle," while elevating Soviet film culture to the selective works of Eisenstein and Pudovkin and to "the stimulating requirements of propaganda, the intrinsic dignity of the subject-matter, [and] the extraordinary standards of a public trained in a progressive theatrical tradition."<sup>99</sup> The invigorating Soviet context contrasted—explicitly and implicitly—with the abysmal American one. In short, not only were American films quickly dispensed with as commercial and therefore inferior, but so were American audiences, which supposedly paled in comparison with those Barr encountered in the Soviet Union. It was his experience in Europe that provided his initial inspiration for building an engaged public for film, naming Paris, London, and Berlin explicitly in the first 1929 press release for the museum. In this announcement he called for a "filmotek" and screening room like those organized in Moscow, wherein "the score or so of finest films of the year would be preserved and shown."<sup>100</sup>

Barr's experiences in Germany were of a strikingly different order than those in the Soviet Union. There he encountered Joseph Goebbels, the

newly appointed German minister of enlightenment and propaganda. In 1933, nearly five years after his tour of Moscow, Barr attended a convention of German film producers, distributors, theater owners, and executives during which Goebbels made clear the new, necessarily nationalist roots of all film activity. During this trip, Barr became keenly aware of the conditions under which art, including film, was being taken up as an instrument of the state in Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union. He observed the increasing practice of censorship, as well as the expulsion of artists and intellectuals throughout the 1930s, most notably members of his beloved Bauhaus. Upon returning from Germany, Barr responded most strongly to what he termed "a cultural crisis—as distinguished from the political and racial one."<sup>101</sup> He dismissed German propaganda, coldly describing its vulgar use of film for the sole purpose of expressing national purity and power. He rejected the validity of German newsreels, citing their utter saturation with political matter.<sup>102</sup> Barr was incensed that film would be conscripted for overtly and objectionable political ends. To him, freedom of expression was paramount.<sup>103</sup>

Armed with a copy of Paul Rotha's *Film Till Now*, Barr renewed his appeals for a film department. By 1932, successful exhibits in photography and architecture indicated a growing museum infrastructure, as well as a loosening of the trustees' grip on exhibition practices. That same year, the museum established the Department of Architecture, headed by Phillip Johnson.<sup>104</sup> Concurrently, Iris Barry was hired. Barry had been a prominent film critic in London, where she wrote for the *Spectator* (1923–25) and for the *Daily Mail* (1925–30), making her film writing the most widely distributed in the United Kingdom. She also cofounded the Film Society of London (1925) and emigrated to New York in 1930.<sup>105</sup> She survived largely as a freelance writer, gaining employment with the support of Phillip Johnson as the museum's first librarian in 1933. From this position, she gathered books for the fledgling library's collection. That same year she also began assembling the museum's monthly bulletin, distributed to national and international museum members. It was on the pages of the bulletin that Barry began to place short reviews of films showing in New York movie theaters.

Barry's film reviews were another method by which trustees were enjoined to cinema's cause. Such efforts were not always successful, however, especially as Barry unashamedly celebrated popular American films as often as European films. She reviewed features as wide-ranging as *The Three Little Pigs* (Burt Gillett, 1933), *Tarzan and His Mate* (Cedric Gibbons, 1934),<sup>106</sup> *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (Alexander Korda, 1933), *Queen*



*Christina* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1933), *Thunder over Mexico* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1933), and *Lot in Sodom* (J. Sibley Watson and Melville Webber, 1933). The first of Barry's reviews discussed the sultry Mae West, calling her film *She Done Him Wrong* (Lowell Sherman, 1933) the "Hollywood product at its vital best—perfect pace, brilliant execution, robust approach to an attack upon a simple subject, and a perfect vehicle for that original screen personality, Mae West."<sup>107</sup> In doing so, Barry succeeded both in discussing a controversial, female film figure and in lending critical acclaim to *Variety's* top-grossing 1933 film in the museum's new bulletin.<sup>108</sup> The popular clashed with the properly artistic, ruffling some museum members' feathers.

Sitting beside her review of *She Done Him Wrong* was a review of Frank Lloyd's *Cavalcade* (1933), adapted from Noël Coward's stage play of the same name. *Cavalcade* was a middlebrow historical drama, documenting the multigenerational effects of war on one family. It also won the Academy Award for Best Picture in 1933. Nonetheless, Barry dismissed the film as "theatrical where it should be cinematic, dense with false sentiment and inverted patriotism," and notably not a film that "calls for praise or imitation."<sup>109</sup> Barry eschewed an industry-celebrated quality film for a streetwise and wisecracking dame who owned her own nightclub. One internal document suggests that these film reviews stirred up "something of a hornet's nest." Abby Rockefeller received calls from indignant friends, expressing outrage that the museum could on the one hand endorse such a "vulgar" film and on the other reject such an obviously high-minded and elevated play as Coward's. Barry explained to Rockefeller that while *Cavalcade* was entirely derivative of stage conventions, West was a uniquely cinematic personality and screen presence, true to the medium and therefore utterly original.<sup>110</sup> Apparently, the explanation was sufficiently persuasive, though the discussion would continue.

As film gained visibility within the museum's ongoing dialogue, Barr seized the momentum. In 1932, he prepared a report and submitted it to the board, arguing that more resources should be dedicated to the new architecture department, in part so that it could be expanded to include industrial design. Moreover, he implored, a film department had to be established as soon as possible.<sup>111</sup> Revisiting this question, Barr highlighted the unavailability of films he deemed to be of unassailable "artistic merit." He noted the consequent lack of opportunity for a critical American film community to develop, while slyly documenting the existence of these communities in major European cities: "Many of those who have made the effort to study and to see the best films are convinced that the foremost

living directors are as great artists as the leading painters, architects, novelists, and playwrights. It may be said without exaggeration that the only great art peculiar to the twentieth century is practically unknown to the American public most capable of appreciating it." Barr lamented the reduction of film as a medium to "the commercial standards of Hollywood,"<sup>112</sup> fortifying his argument by listing such exceptional filmmakers as Man Ray, Fernand Léger, László Moholy-Nagy, Walter Ruttmann, Ralph Steiner, and Luis Buñuel and by making vague references to films that have "been lost in the welter of commercial mediocrity."<sup>113</sup>

Barr foresaw an exhibition program that would facilitate the formation of a creative and critical community around cinema, one that previously had been impossible due to a lack of films.<sup>114</sup> It would feature amateur and avant-garde experiments, as well as include works by filmmakers now identified as constituting the canon of narrative "art cinema" (Abel Gance, Maurice Stiller, René Clair, E. A. Dupont, Jacques Feyder). Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Chaplin "as director" also earned mention. Barr called attention as well to the decaying state of many of "the great films of the past quarter century." He suggested, consequently, that a curatorial as well as an exhibition division might also be considered for the museum. In its earliest formulations, however, the Film Library resembled a cine salon, designed to show accomplished works by great, primarily European, artists.<sup>115</sup> The need for this salon was punctuated by the absence of means by which a critical community might grow and thrive: the basic availability of suitable films. The curatorial mandate of the library was intended to be similarly selective—to preserve and secure access to films that fit within a particular (and perhaps only partially formulated) conception of properly artistic films. Concluding this report, Barr stated that a film department would expand the museum's public, increase its support, and interest new members. It would also be an opportunity to demonstrate a much needed intelligence and "influential leadership."<sup>116</sup> In 1932, the public envisioned by Barr was a somewhat limited one, imagined to include a professional audience of producers, directors, amateur filmmakers, critics and "other experts," art patrons, and museum members. Potential interest by the general public was not anticipated.

On the one hand, Barr's rhetoric seems carefully crafted and highly strategic. Appeals to "capable audiences," "commercial mediocrity," and film "masters" catered somewhat shamelessly to board members' and trustees' skepticism regarding the popular and commercial taint of the medium, bypassing along the way the challenge that some of these films (and much other modern art) offered to these same notions. On the other hand, it is difficult to know whether Barr's general reliance on European directors and

his quick dismissal of “commercialism” belie his own chauvinism, that of the trustees, or both. Regardless, there was an observable predisposition toward non-American films, valued partly because they were European and partly because they were produced outside of American commercial enterprises, which were seen by many cultural elites to be crass, compromised, and incapable of expressing intelligence. Nevertheless, Barr was demonstrably determined to include film—even if a highly selective type—in the museum.

Barr’s efforts to convince board members of film’s merit took some unconventional forms. In later years, Barr recalled escorting Lillie Bliss, one of the museum’s three cofounders, to the Little Carnegie (an early art house cinema) to see Carl Dreyer’s *Passion de Jeanne d’Arc* (1928) as early as 1930. A. Conger Goodyear was ordered by Barr to see *Africa Speaks* (Walter Futter, 1930). Barr also sent postcards to Abby Rockefeller and others with recommendations of current films “which seemed works of art.”<sup>117</sup> Rockefeller eventually acquiesced to the idea of film art, though she continued to express concern about accepting films that contained sexual and therefore objectionable content, which she euphemistically termed “Freudian.” Her friends, as we have seen, had similar reservations.<sup>118</sup>

Despite the controversy, that same year a committee was formed to investigate the possibilities of a film department, with Edward Warburg serving as chairman and John Hay Whitney and even Abby Rockefeller serving as committee members. Whitney’s presence on the Film Library committee is important for several reasons. First, it indicates his early commitment to building a film department at MoMA. Second, his participation provides a sense of the industry savvy and formidable wealth that made the Film Library possible. Whitney had strong links to the film industry nurtured through his business partnership with David O. Selznick and their investment in Technicolor. He paired his interest in cinema with an avid interest in modern art, which he also collected. His aunt was Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, daughter of the railroad baron Cornelius Vanderbilt, and founder of the Whitney Studio Club, which became the Whitney Museum in 1931. In 1927, upon the death of his father, Payne Whitney, Jock had inherited claim to one of the largest family fortunes in the United States, comparable in scale to that of the Rockefeller and Morgan estates. Whitney was one of the wealthiest men in the country, bridging the wide gap between the film industry and the East Coast establishment.<sup>119</sup>

With a committee in place, Barry’s services were solicited. Under the committee’s sanction, she conducted research and orchestrated experimental film screenings, which were held at the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hart-

ford, Connecticut, in the winter of 1934–1935. The Wadsworth was the oldest public museum in the United States and an influential site for early exhibits of modern art. A. Everett “Chick” Austin Jr. was the director of the Athenaeum, a graduate of Harvard, and an intimate of MoMA insiders such as Alfred Barr, Lincoln Kirstein, Jere Abbott, Philip Johnson, and Henry-Russell Hitchcock.<sup>120</sup> The Athenaeum provided a kind of laboratory for Barry; it also supplied films to an established coterie of interested viewers. There she generated film programs, as well as notes to accompany select films. Yet, preaching to the converted was not enough; a larger audience was needed. Consequently, Barry concurrently conducted surveys asking college presidents and department heads, educators, and museum directors about their interest in educational film exhibition. According to her, the response was overwhelmingly positive.

Buttressed by well-documented support, in April 1935, Barry and John E. Abbott (Barry’s husband and a former Wall Street financier) submitted the foundational document for the establishment of a film department, then named the Film Library.<sup>121</sup> This proposal was funded by a grant supplied by the Rockefeller Foundation and Whitney.<sup>122</sup> Two months later, the formation of the Film Library was publicly announced. Barry presided as curator, Whitney was appointed president, and Abbott became director. The library’s official mandate, published as “An Outline of a Project for Founding the Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art,” read as follows:

The purpose of the Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art is to trace, catalog, assemble, preserve, exhibit and circulate to museums and colleges single films or programs of all types of film in exactly the same manner in which the museum traces, catalogs, exhibits and circulates paintings, sculpture, models and photographs of architectural buildings, or reproductions of works of art, so that the film may be studied and enjoyed as any other one of the arts is studied and enjoyed.<sup>123</sup>

Sidestepping debates about high, low, or mass cultural forms, the Film Library set out to include a comprehensive sample of “film art,” a working category seemingly unrestricted by reformist, high-aesthetic, or Marxist critiques of Hollywood film or bourgeois concepts of art. Barr’s Eurocentrism was radically expanded. “Film art” grew to include examples of modernist European cinema, as well as narrative, documentary, spectacular, Western, slapstick, comedy-drama, musical, animated, abstract, scientific, educational, dramatic, amateur, and newsreel films.<sup>124</sup>

Like Barr’s earlier pleas, the “Outline” asserted that the motion picture was the only great art peculiar to the twentieth century, significant not only for its “aesthetic qualities” but also for its effect on taste and the lives

of the “large bulk of the population.”<sup>125</sup> Yet the Film Library’s mission addressed the sociological and populist functions of cinema as well. Moreover, Barr’s earlier cine salon combined with the ascendant museology; the library staff intended not only to collect such films but also to circulate them widely through the expanding exhibition circuit of museums, schools, film societies, and civic clubs, making available “those films which the individual groups everywhere have found difficult to obtain.”<sup>126</sup> Also included in the “Outline” was a plan to lend projectors, to compose and circulate film notes, to assemble a library of film literature, to act as a clearinghouse for information on all aspects of film, and to link interested groups to this information and to each other. Nourishing a nascent film culture was a conscious yet carefully designed goal, avoiding contentious claims that film was simply an art like all others and also avoiding the association of the Film Library programs with entertainment—the naughty cousin of educational and art films. The sweeping nature of this plan reveals more than Abbott and Barry’s enthusiasm; it also marks a clear shift away from the exclusive European-type cine salon first envisioned by Barr. Amateur, avant-garde, and popular American films—old and new—would ideally take their place beside the works of European directors, in part so that American films could be more fully respected, and in part so that an increasingly diverse community could be supplied with the films it wanted.<sup>127</sup> Such acts constitute an expanded idea of institutional function, embodying fully the basic tenets of a mass museology.

The institutionalization of film at MoMA was informed by several key shifts that had as much to do with film as with American ideas about modern art and modern museums. The trustees initially rejected the inclusion of films in their museum, deeming them unworthy of museum resources, thus also expunging important elements of the modernist critique while happily collecting its more palatable paintings and sculptures. Alfred Barr struck a determined pose, arguing that particular kinds of films would be suitable for and would enhance the profile of the museum. As a film department plan slowly developed, its mandate became more expansive, growing to include a wide range of film types and activities. The proposal was cautiously accepted with little risk being incurred by the museum, as even the proposal for the project was funded by sources that did not draw on established museum coffers. Rather than bowing to the ascendant Eurocentric critiques of film, the Film Library adopted an expansive acquisition policy, thereby treating film’s role in aesthetic and social critique more as a question rather than as a foregone conclusion. The inclusion of popular American films echoes the prominence of Progressive educational ideals

and their influence on museum programs. It also foreshadows the unavoidably prominent role of the film industry. Undergirding all these factors is the plain and clear ascendance of a new kind of museum.

MoMA marks a point in the history of American museums in which the gradually shifting lines of what constitutes "art" turned toward the problem of tracing the slippery interface between mass cultural, technological, and industrial objects with traditionalist institutional and idealist models for what art should be. The Film Library further pushed and perhaps partially blurred these lines, mirroring the larger museological structures that themselves had integrated consumer culture and mass media. Increasingly reproducible and mobile art became fully institutionalized. Ideas about modern art but also about public utility, access, and social reform through the arts provided further impetus for MoMA's Film Library. The early intellectual and institutional history outlined here suggests a compelling moment in which film's complex status as "art" and its ability to technologically enable a new museological ideal facilitated the growth of a lasting film institution and spurred the evolution of contemporary art museums.

## 4 An Awkward and Dangerous Task

### *The Film Library Takes Shape*

When Iris Barry took up her role as the first curator of MoMA's Film Library, her work was just beginning. Barry did not share the deep skepticism about film's value that pervaded the museum's board of trustees. Neither did she wholly share the Eurocentric leanings of the museum's first director, Alfred Barr. Barry was a dedicated cinephile who even in her distaste for particular films betrayed her general passion for all things cinematic. This included an approach to Hollywood films that demonstrated a considerable range, from dismissive edicts to unbridled enthusiasm.

Although the Film Library had gained official status and an adequate—if temporary—operating budget in 1935, the debate about an institution of film art inside and outside the museum was mounting. The trustees had granted the Film Library a home within the larger institution, but its status was not uniformly embraced, and its survival was far from guaranteed. Library staff had little sense of how they might acquire a permanent source of income and attain some degree of self-sufficiency. Further, in attempting to build a broadly based Film Library, that is, an institution that both collected and exhibited a wide range of films, the constituency of parties with vested interests grew to include not only art patrons, philanthropists, and trustees but also individual filmmakers, American and European producers, celebrities, government agencies, film collectors, critics, commercial exhibitors, the educational community, and, of course, the general public. Populists and elites at times disagreed about the unnatural matching of film and museum; at other times the pairing was happily accepted. In light of the strong and frequently irreconcilable reactions to the library's project, skilled rhetorical maneuvering was required to ensure adequate approval, thereby guaranteeing survival. In short, a daunting task remained: selling the value of film art to numerous and strikingly different communities of interest.

This chapter provides a brief overview of all these activities, tending especially to the ways in which Film Library staff legitimated its project to three particularly important interest groups: the museum trustees, the American film industry, and the Rockefeller Foundation. The fact that a broadly mandated film archive, study center, and distributor/exhibitor was housed in an art museum inevitably shaped the rhetorical strategies and the activities adopted by the Film Library's staff. Yet its museum home both helped and hindered its success. Equally important were the interests of other key constituents who were unmoved by or even outright suspicious of this new modern institution exalting the virtues of film art. For instance, John Marshall, head of the Humanities Division of the Rockefeller Foundation, was the library's most consistent and formidable supporter during its first eight years. Marshall was far less concerned to forward the ideals of film as a high or fine art or even as an archival object per se, and much more determined to explore the possible contributions of film to educational and civic reform through particular kinds of exhibition practices. On the one hand there was a powerful philanthropy, and on the other the American film industry. Hollywood held vast resources, as well as copy and exhibition rights to its films. Yet American studios maintained tight control over these rights. For instance, nonprofit or free exhibition, a key element of the library's plan, invited close scrutiny and strict oversight. While the industry happily took the opportunity to publicly support the idea of MoMA's library, associating its own goodwill with that of the library, it gave little in the way of material assistance. Rather, it sought to benefit from the library's efforts to increase appreciation of American films, largely through its efforts to insert Hollywood films into happy historical narratives. In dealings with the Film Library, studio executives and most frequently Will Hays (head of Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America) neatly managed distrust of the East Coast and ostensibly elite ideas about art by aligning film and the film industry with the triumphal march of American history and the growth of a unique cultural heritage. Finally, many trustees maintained a primary interest in painting and sculpture, demonstrating little more than tolerance for the idea of film art.

With the Film Library's formation, the ideas and products endemic to the concept of film art were implicated in a range of institutional mandates. Film art remained a rather vague proposition: Which films? In which circumstances? What kind of art? Saving films as valuable pieces of a lost history thus became the most common and general public explanation of the library's purpose. The term *art* was used loosely and variably by library staff, sometimes not invoked at all and sometimes cautiously foregrounded



in library documents and press releases. The proposal that film had a history that had been lost provided the primary umbrella strategy under which legitimating films as high or low art or as sociological documents could be situated. In short, old films were construed as historical films. Under this rubric, press releases, speeches, radio shows, and published articles attributed a variety of values to aging celluloid—aesthetic, popular, informational, and sociological—depending on the context and the films being discussed. Above all, these various ways of thinking about film were articulated firmly from within the assumption that film was uniquely American, and that such knowledge was new and essential for the culturally informed citizen. In other words, while the Film Library's place within a museum of modern art made its project possible at all, the institutionalization of film as art was simultaneously the institutionalization of film as American history and as education. Despite its firm commitment to European cinema, at the end of the day, the library—among other things—needed money to pay for its activities. It thus balanced its interests carefully. Navigating a tortuous terrain, library staff strategically addressed their supporters and developed their project, aware of its intellectual complexity as well as its material and political fragility.

#### LIBRARY BASICS

The Film Library was initially funded by Rockefeller Foundation grants, which were designed as temporary seed grants. This money was allocated on a matching scheme, using a 4:1 ratio in the first year and then a 1:1 ratio for each of the following years.<sup>1</sup> Available evidence suggests that during these first years John Hay Whitney provided the necessary balance from his considerable family estate.<sup>2</sup> It was expected that the library would be self-sufficient after three years. Nonetheless, additional grants followed, though they diminished as an overall portion of the budget. Throughout the first twelve years of the library's operation, the Rockefeller Foundation supplied 32 percent of its budget; 20 percent came from film rentals, and 4 percent from the industry. The remaining 44 percent came from private donations or from the museum. The Rockefeller Foundation was the single most important source of funding throughout the period, providing almost 80 percent of the library's funding during its first three years and more than 50 percent during its first eight years, thus breaking the foundation's usual practice of providing seed money only—not maintenance money—to such projects. After foundation contributions ceased, the museum began

to provide 70 percent of necessary funds. Despite the fact that film ranked second in a public poll taken to rate the importance of museum activities—hence indicating its publicity value both to cinema generally and to the museum particularly—the library failed to obtain any consistent support from the film industry.<sup>3</sup>

Whitney provides the obvious exception to many of the rules that govern the history of the library. Whitney was both a member of the film industry and a powerful museum insider. As a primary investor in Technicolor, founder of Pioneer Pictures, and cofounder with David O. Selznick of Selznick International Pictures, he was also an avid art collector. Born into extraordinary wealth, he committed himself to philanthropy, thoroughbreds, art, film, and venture capitalism. He was an aggressive investor and maintained considerable press holdings. Whitney bridged two worlds—modern art and the business of film—proving a powerful ally to the Film Library's project. As a prominent member of the board of trustees and the first president of the Film Library, he opened doors to his industry colleagues and provided the only funds that could in any way be construed as coming from inside the museum during these earliest years. In addition to money, his contributions to the Film Library seem to be largely related to his film industry savvy, his personal and business relationships with particular Hollywood personalities, and the procurement of several films from his producer-colleagues on the West Coast.<sup>4</sup>

With this somewhat tenuous funding base and an ostensibly public mandate, the Film Library staff proposed "to make possible for the first time a comprehensive study of the film as a living art."<sup>5</sup> They set out "to trace, catalog, assemble, preserve, exhibit and circulate to museums and colleges single films or programs of all types of films."<sup>6</sup> On the library's acquisition philosophy, Barry noted that "there are patently many kinds of films, as well as simply good ones or bad ones." She explained: "Considerable effort has been made all along to collect propaganda films, and film of opinion of all kinds—pacifist or Nazi as readily as the others. Such vanished fragments of the past have also been dug up and preserved as glimpses of "Pussyfoot" Johnson, suffragettes, Rudolph Hess, the Charleston, while particular care has been taken to acquire works by cinematic experimenters like Man Ray, Fernand Léger, Luis Buñuel."<sup>7</sup> To this list must also be added popular films, films that capture a "vanished moral judgement or mode of thinking," "great performances," bad films that stand in for an important phase of technological development, and timeless masterpieces. Barry continued:

In essence, the films collected by the Film Library are to be regarded primarily as basic material for celebration about motion pictures gener-

ally, and those which are shown include not only excellent films but characteristic examples of many styles of production. (One most important fact is that—like the famous coffee—all the films shown by the Film Library are dated.) None of them is shown as the “best” or “the greatest.” All are presented as being of interest from one point of view or another—in technique, in content, in promise, in trend.<sup>8</sup>

In short, a rather wide net had been cast; the library included a broad range of film types in its official archival and exhibitory goals. In contrast to the dominant ethos of American film culture, the Film Library’s was also staunchly internationalist, with a heavy European bent. In contrast to the dominant ethos of the museum, the library’s plans were markedly American. Nonetheless, a unified task subtended the project: acquiring films from across borders national and international, from companies extant and defunct, and from collections organized and scattered. Under these same conditions, exhibition rights as well as resources for storage, preservation, and exhibition also had to be obtained. Ongoing access to the collection was considered as important as the collection itself. Perhaps most crucially, once collected, these films would be treated with the same kinds of classificatory schemes applied to other objects of enduring significance. As the preceding quotation indicates, for instance, films would be dated.

Given the project’s scope, from the beginning Film Library staff forged links with an expanded community. Even before the library was given official status, Barry and John Abbott (the library’s first director and Barry’s husband) wrote copious letters attempting to establish contact, support, and resource exchange with organizations of a wide variety of sociopolitical and aesthetic concerns throughout the United States, Europe, and elsewhere. These included the fledgling National Archives, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Harvard Film Foundation, the National Board of Review, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, the Workers Film and Photo League, the journal *Experimental Cinema*, the Film Society of London, the International Institute of Cinematography (Rome), the British Film Institute, the Women’s Motion Picture Society of Japan, and many more.<sup>9</sup> Library staff issued a general form letter to schools, museums, and art clubs, pointing to the increased regard for film study as well as to the many challenges to securing the means by which such study might actually develop. Long the primary site of art history and fine arts departments, women’s colleges (Hunter, Radcliffe, Vassar, Haverford, and Bryn Mawr) and other institutions of higher education received lengthy questionnaires.<sup>10</sup> MoMA’s film department gathered basic information: Are you interested in knowing more

about film? Would you like to integrate films into your curriculum? Do you have resources available for film rental? Do you own a film projector? Do you possess facilities such as lecture halls or reliable electrical current to operate a film projector?<sup>11</sup>

An internal report submitted in 1937 claimed that contact had been established and maintained, and materials exchanged, with organizations in the United States, Canada, England, France, Germany, Cuba, Romania, Japan, Belgium, Sweden, and the Soviet Union.<sup>12</sup> The internationalism of the Film Library's outlook is perhaps best indexed by noting its foundational role in forming the Federation Internationale des Archives du Film (FIAF) in 1938, the most long-standing project to coordinate film archiving internationally and to foster resource sharing among archives. FIAF also represented the internationalism of the film archive idea itself. Member archives emerged contemporaneously with the Film Library: the National Film Library (British Film Institute, London, 1935), the Cinémathèque Française (Paris, 1936), and the Reichsfilmarchiv (Berlin, 1935). Each was guided by considerably different criteria, reflecting the distinct national film cultures and types of funding available to such projects during this period. For instance, the Reichsfilmarchiv fell under the purview of Joseph Goebbels's Ministry of Culture, storing films as vindicators and victims of state power. Participant in a generative cinephilia, Langlois began the Cinémathèque Française by piling films in his bathtub.<sup>13</sup>

MoMA's relations with these archives were initiated during a trip taken by Barry and John Abbott in the summer of 1936. The two set sail for Europe to acquire original, uncensored, undamaged prints representative of national production histories. They visited London, Paris, Hanover, Berlin, Warsaw, Moscow, Leningrad, Helsingfors, and Stockholm, locations in which other film archives had recently been established or were in the process of being established (figure 8). Barry and Abbott met with officials from these organizations, discussing films, institutional plans, and international strategies. They negotiated with members of the National Film Library of the British Film Institute. They struck agreements with officials from the well-funded Reichsfilmarchiv in Berlin who proved to be generous and forthcoming with materials. Barry was relieved to learn that many films made by recently exiled Jewish artists and filmmakers had not yet been destroyed.<sup>14</sup> The Cinémathèque Française was forming at this time, and its curator, Henri Langlois, reportedly enjoyed a cordial meeting with Barry and Abbott in Paris. The "French," Barry later reported, acting as official spokespeople for Belgium and Italy as well, were extremely eager to have their films kept elsewhere, as the threat of another war loomed large



FIGURE 8. John Abbott and Iris Barry hunting for films in Europe, 1936. Courtesy of the Department of Film and Media, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

and memories of films sacrificed for their nitroglycerin content during the previous war continued to haunt French cinephiles.<sup>15</sup> MoMA accepted the task. Indeed, Barry registered cooperation and enthusiasm at all stops except in the Soviet Union, where officials expressed concern and suspicion about a private organization collecting films for the public good. It was also here that Barry and Abbott met for the first time with Jay Leyda, pioneer Soviet film scholar who was studying at the Moscow State Film School un-

der Sergei Eisenstein's tutelage. Leyda returned to the United States with Barry and Abbott, continuing his work and research at the Film Library.<sup>16</sup>

Films obtained on this trip include *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1919); *The Golem* (Carl Boese and Paul Wegener, 1920); *Variety* (Ewald Dupont, 1925); *Faust* (F. W. Murnau, 1926); *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927); *M* (Fritz Lang, 1931); *Italian Straw Hat* (René Clair, 1927); *Fantômas* (Louis Feuillade, 1913); *The Fall of the House of Usher* (Jean Epstein, 1928); *Un Chien Andalou* (Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, 1929); *L'Étoile de Mer* (Man Ray, 1928); *A Colour Box* (Len Lye, 1935); and *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (Alexander Korda, 1933).<sup>17</sup> Some films—for example, Germaine Dulac's *The Seashell and the Clergyman* (1929)—were given personally by their makers. Others were donated indirectly. For instance, Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1926) was obtained in Berlin, and René Clair's *Paris Qui Dort* (1923) was given by its British distributor, J. S. Fairfax-Jones, Esq. Bringing these films through customs was another challenge. Because there was no U.S. tax exemption for importing cultural or educational films when they began their treasure hunt, Barry and Abbot engaged in ongoing negotiations with customs officials. In the meantime, the early acquisition of French films was expedited by the French government, which offered the Film Library use of its diplomatic pouch for the transport of films to and from Paris.<sup>18</sup> Film exchange back and forth with Canada was expedited by a similar agreement established in 1936.<sup>19</sup> By 1937, a more general agreement has been struck with U.S. customs, as Barry and Abbott successfully secured an exemption from commercial duties for foreign films if their intended use could be deemed to be of "non-theatrical and educational" value.

Partly because of the worsening political situation in Europe during these years, the eager collection of Soviet and German films throughout the 1930s did not go entirely unnoticed or uncriticized back home. Barry reported: "The acquisition of foreign material of this kind gave rise to a whispering campaign (originating, it seemed, among small groups of film enthusiasts with axes to grind) that the Film Library of the Museum as a whole, perhaps even the Board of Trustees (!) was infiltrated with Nazi principles (this was in 1937 or 1938) or with Communist principles (this was in 1940) or at best with some 'un-American spirit.'"<sup>20</sup> These whispering campaigns occasionally played themselves out in the press. Barry defended herself against accusations that she had "packed her staff" with English (as in non-American) assistants. She replied to these claims by publicly detailing the birthplace of each staff member employed by the li-

brary; fifteen of nineteen had been born in the United States.<sup>21</sup> Also during this time, lists of library holdings were made, grouped under the headings "American" and "foreign" to answer charges that they were unduly or unpatriotically biased toward "foreign" (as in un-American) cinema.<sup>22</sup> Foreign art was one thing; foreign films seem to have been a more vexing matter. Such rumors persisted despite the common claim made by Film Library staff that the motion picture is "triumphantly and predominantly an American expression."<sup>23</sup> Of course, it is highly likely that they in part made this claim to further protect themselves from such assaults.

The political turmoil and environment of suspicion that flavored attacks on the museum during this period were symptoms of the widespread political tensions that ironically facilitated the relative ease with which library staff acquired European films. This was true not only because European filmmakers and cinephiles feared the destruction of beloved films by impending war but also because the Film Library promised recognition and an audience for films that otherwise had little chance of reaching American screens. Films, like literature and painting, served a vaguely propagandist function, providing markers of national accomplishment. The willingness of the French government to offer transport for its films was not entirely benevolent. The diplomatic pouch allowed French filmmakers and distributors to circumvent possible censorship as well as commercial duty; French films deemed art further punctuated the wider cultural project of representing French accomplishment abroad.<sup>24</sup>

Another manifestation of the Film Library's internationalism was its active program of visiting writers, filmmakers, and researchers. Throughout the first ten years of the library's existence, scholars and artists as wide-ranging as Paul Rotha, Fernand Léger, Luis Buñuel, Siegfried Kra-cauer, and previously mentioned Soviet film expert Jay Leyda were funded to lecture and/or conduct research at the Film Library, making use of the site and the growing collection of books, films, and film-related materials housed in the study collection.<sup>25</sup> Also important was the expanding body of American film scholarship generated partly by these same resources, including the work of Lewis Jacobs, Gilbert Seldes, and the pivotal publication of the first index to film literature, funded largely by the Writers Program of the Works Progress Administration (WPA).<sup>26</sup>

The proliferating assortment of film writing that accompanied the library's exhibition programs represented a similarly expanding literature. Film notes written by Barry, Leyda, Alistair Cooke, and Richard Griffith became early, important resources for university film courses, film societies, and clubs throughout the United States and Canada.<sup>27</sup> Library staff

fostered the study of cinema directly by inviting individual scholars to work with their materials. The library facilitated film study indirectly by supplying films, film notes, and sometimes lecturers for courses. Equally significant was the orchestration of formal university curricula. From 1937 through 1939, Barry and Abbott collaborated with faculty at Columbia University to conduct a comprehensive course entitled the Development, Technique, and Appreciation of the Motion Picture, as part of the extension programs offered by the Department of Fine Arts. Prominent scholars, producers, actors, and directors were announced as participating authorities: Eric Knight, Erwin Panofsky, Rotha, Seldes, James Cagney, King Vidor, J. Robert Rubin, Leyda, and Barry. The course trained people working in the industry, as well as those hoping to teach courses pertaining to cinema.<sup>28</sup> Barry transcribed the lecture notes for this course. She intended to publish and disseminate them to other institutions generating film study programs.

The library became a prominent and active coordinator of organizations interested in using films as integral parts of their institutional mandates, which included a sizable range of purposes: education, charity, and uplift. MoMA staff corresponded with or serviced schools, universities, and museums but also newly formed film societies, hospitals, WPA groups, prisons, Jewish centers, YMCAs, and the American Civil Liberties Union.<sup>29</sup> Lectures and speeches were given, in part, as educational services and, in part, to advocate for support of the library itself. All members of the staff participated, though Barry and Abbott bore the brunt of this public relations work, delivering speeches at meetings of the National Board of Review, the American Association of Museums, the American Library Association, Cooper Union, the American Federation of Women's Clubs, the Resettlement Administration, the Society of Motion Picture Engineers, and the Washington Film Society, an important venue for Film Library programs.<sup>30</sup> Radio appearances were also made by the Film Library staff, with information given about everything from camera tricks to the development of the star system.<sup>31</sup> These were complemented by numerous articles in a striking range of publications, from lifestyle magazines to art journals to tourism literature.<sup>32</sup>

Throughout these activities, the Film Library staff identified as foundational justifications for their work the increasing presence of films in daily life, their high-cultural as well as broad social influence, and the dearth of resources available for their study. In this instance Barry, the library's most frequent spokesperson, reiterated: "The motion picture is unique in three important ways. First, it is the one medium of expression in which America



has influenced the world. Second, it has had a marked influence on contemporary life. And third, it is such a young art that we can study it at first hand from its beginnings: the primitives among movies are only forty years old."<sup>33</sup> The effects of the American film industry's aggressive corporate—and occasionally imperialist—ambitions were rhetorically simplified to a vague notion of influence. Official or public critiques of Hollywood were utterly absent from discourses emanating from the library. The proximal yet fleeting nature of film's youth was invoked to pair "influence" on contemporary American life with the sense of both a pressing need and a passing opportunity. These strategies acquired greater nuance when film library staff addressed specific audiences. To the trustees of the museum, film needed to be constantly legitimated as a medium deserving the prestige and investment of museum resources. As such, particular films were aligned with other high-cultural forms as well as with the need to develop a critical and responsive public. To the industry, rather than emphasizing the importance of film art as a distinct aesthetic category, library staff construed old films as popular historical documents, markers of American industrial accomplishment, and, most important, part of an honorable and nonprofit venture that would lend prestige to film generally. The Rockefeller Foundation was concerned to use celluloid as the cornerstone of a strong civic and educational infrastructure for children and adults. Modernizing the means by which people learned was a key part of this. Each of these constituencies was essential to the success of the Film Library: the trustees controlled the museum; the industry owned copyrights and marshaled vast resources; celebrities brought glamour and public endorsements; and the Rockefeller Foundation supplied the money.

#### UNTRUSTING TRUSTEES

When the Film Library was first established, its offices were located in the Columbia Broadcasting Building at 485 Madison Avenue, blocks away from the museum's main site. A storage closet served as a screening room. John Hay Whitney made a larger space available for private screenings in his offices at 125 East Forty-sixth Street. The library's operations would not be integrated into those of the museum until four years later, in 1939, when a new building was opened at its current location, 111 West Fifty-third Street. During this initial four-year period, the Film Library's grant money and private donations covered all costs. The library benefited in few identifiable ways from existing museum infrastructure. This dislocation

only furthered what, in later years, Barry described as a general perception by members and friends of the museum that the Film Library lived a somewhat "mysterious existence." The relationship of its work to the rest of the museum seemed "rather remote." She further likened the early character of the Film Library to the "slightly ambiguous position of an adopted child who is never seen in the company of the family."<sup>34</sup> The Film Library was not accepted as an equal and legitimate part of the museum's greater whole.<sup>35</sup>

Largely ignorant of things cinematic, museum trustees were not generally friendly to the idea of film art, in part because many of the trustees did not see films and also because film was plagued with low status in established art circles. Moreover, the source of film's most prominent value was radically different from that of high-art objects—a value not conventionally found in the rarefied film object designed for individual contemplation but in projected images intended for mass exhibition to large audiences. Films could not be hung on walls, and they did not acquire monetary value over time. As such, film required a form of value that would be both intelligible and appealing to doubtful trustees, more attuned to the specificities of the art market than the box office. Punctuating the efforts to gain the support of trustees and board members, many of whom purposefully avoided seeing films, Alfred Barr regularly forwarded them movie tickets, film recommendations, and select examples of published criticism.<sup>36</sup> From the library's inception, Barry and Abbott sought to work with and around this skepticism; they crafted a constant barrage of meticulously detailed internal reports. Attempting to legitimate the organization's very existence, they provided a panoply of justifications for continuing its unorthodox plan.

The project to make film art palatable to board and museum members thus took two primary forms. The first was the identification of single filmmakers such as "Pabst, Sennett, Clair, Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Griffith, Chaplin, or Seastrom."<sup>37</sup> Concentrating on "great" artist-directors made the creative process of film production more familiar to those invested in the idea of singular, creative genius, anchoring cinematic creativity in an individual rather than an industry or a technology. This strategy, discussed further in chapter 3, was invoked in Barr's early attempts to justify a film department. With the bulk of responsibility for convincing trustees placed on Abbott and Barry, however, this battle plan became more elaborate. Abbott and Barry asserted the importance of popular American films. They also loosened the exclusive association of film with traditional cultural forms and began linking films to other expressive media that had benefited both from technologies of mass reproduction such as novels and from pub-

lic institutions such as libraries and museums. Widespread accessibility, they argued, did not necessarily condemn any particular medium to an ill-desired fate. In fact, the opposite could indeed prove true. According to Abbott and Barry:

The situation is very much as though no novels were available to the public excepting the current year's output. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that had the novel since Defoe and Behn been known under circumstances similar to those under which the film is known, the repute of the novel and the level of creation in novel-writing would both have remained considerably lower than they are. To draw an even closer analogy, the situation is as though there existed a great interest in painting on the part of the public, but that almost no paintings were ever exhibited save those executed within the previous twelve months.<sup>38</sup>

Likening films to novels and paintings, Barry and Abbott sought to denaturalize their unavailability outside the largely ephemeral and restrained context of commercial exhibition. In doing so, they invoked a very particular set of values: a classically liberal faith in democratic access to cultural forms combined with assumptions about the role of art in uplifting the human spirit and improving moral-aesthetic and critical standards generally. Supplementing this rhetoric was the mandate of the museum itself, conceived in its ideal sense as an educational institution that made art more accessible, intelligible, and therefore more beneficial to a needy and deserving public—a project of cultural stewardship. Under the wings of this stewardship the Film Library sought protection for old films, attempting to extract them from their ephemeral existence as popular and commercial leisure. The basic unavailability of the conditions of exhibition conducive to the ideals of attentive analysis, quiet contemplation, and, perhaps most important, repeat viewing was highlighted. MoMA's caretaking through film thus involved not just saving films or making them more widely available; it also involved the development of institutions supportive of "critical standards" so that the quality and experience of film in general would be elevated.<sup>39</sup> That is, Barry and Abbott argued to trustees that films could and should be implicated in a socio-aesthetic project of analysis and criticism; the Film Library's role was to act as a mediator of value and disseminator of select interpretive skills that would benefit all. In short, they implored that films had to be seen, discussed, and written about.

Evidence indicates that trustees were also eager to know precisely who would be interested in Film Library services. In other words, it was paramount that Barry prove there was demand for the resources the library

sought to provide. Such demand was neither assumed nor obvious; it was, however, thoroughly documented. Barry and her staff assembled elaborate lists of institutions ministered by library resources. A 1937 Film Library report indicated that 1,520 such organizations had corresponded with or been served by library staff.<sup>40</sup> Internal museum documentation consistently foregrounds the range and quantity of services supplied to these groups, emphasizing not only the versatility of the Film Library but also the gap the organization had filled. Regular reports were also made about attendance at early film screenings. Abby Rockefeller, in particular, received regular notices that attested to robust movie admissions. Notes and memos boasted that the auditorium was frequently filled to capacity, with "50 people at each screening left standing or on the floor with even more turned back at the door."<sup>41</sup>

Trustees also heard broad testimony to the importance of the Film Library within an international context, further giving nationalist form to ideas about American film heritage and history. The fact that archival movements were under way in other countries not only served to legitimate the activities of the Film Library but also gave an American archive added importance for establishing an American presence in emerging international cultural institutions. Gestures toward the essential "Americanness" of film art and film history were dramatized still more by the absence of American films in critical film circles being generated domestically. Internal reports complained that it was easier to see foreign films than it was to see great, old American films.<sup>42</sup> Of noncurrent releases, such documents claimed, only Soviet films were readily available to film societies and study groups:

Such study as has therefore been possible has created an entirely wrong impression about the history, development and tendency of the film because students of the film in the United States have come to consider the foreign film with disproportionate respect and to disregard or underestimate the domestic product, especially the older and all-important American films of 1903–1925 from which most of the admired foreign films stem. . . . Americans generally underrate this peculiarly American contribution to the arts, and the prestige of the American film as a whole is disproportionately low in America for exactly these reasons. . . . The Secretary suggests that a proper appreciation of this peculiarly native expression and a proper understanding of and pride in it on the part of intelligent movie-goers would ultimately influence the quality of films to be produced.<sup>43</sup>

Gaining access to long-gone American and Hollywood films was construed as an essential step in rectifying an imbalance in film resources and,

therefore, in the writing of film history. Serious study of the motion picture would remedy the misconception that valuable films came only from abroad, helping to establish a native artistic tradition, to trace American influence on foreign film traditions, and vice versa. Barry and Abbott confronted directly the anticommercial and, therefore, anti-American film sentiment they knew to be symptomatic of entrenched and traditional approaches to culture. Rather than accommodating the conservative view of museum trustees, they asserted boldly that film was not only quintessentially modern but also quintessentially American. Its development should be considered a point of national pride.<sup>44</sup> Forwarding the "Americanness" of film may have been seen as a way to quiet critics of the museum's internationalist acquisition policies, which were interpreted by some as overly intellectual, Eurocentric, and thus anti-American.<sup>45</sup> In this scenario, then, film was construed as a method to make the whole of the museum seem more American and more in line with the rising populism of the period.

An important aspect of valuing the claim that film was a distinctly American expression was affirming the popularity and influence of American cinema on European culture. In other words, tracing American influence internationally served to legitimate an indigenous tradition, one Barry argued had been neglected by an emerging generation of American critics, scholars, and art institutions. The logic goes something like this: if the French can appreciate American ingenuity, then surely we can, too. The clearest example of this strategy rests in the Exhibition of American Art, 1609–1938, held at the Musée de Jeu de Paume in Paris, in April and May 1938. Included in this exhibit were representative American paintings, sculptures, architectural models, prints, photographs, and films, embodying Barr's multidepartmental approach to curation. The Jeu de Paume film program was a sweeping overview of American film history divided into three now conventionalized periods: (1) "From the Invention of Films to 'The Birth of a Nation'"; (2) "Progress and Close of the Silent Era"; and (3) "The Sound Film." The library staff assembled three fifty-minute anthologies, which included brief clips, shown daily, of popular figures such as Fred Astaire, the Marx Brothers, Rudolph Valentino, Mickey Mouse, Mary Pickford, Buster Keaton, Al Jolson, and more. Two other exhibits were mounted, one involving stills illustrating the history of American film, the other a detailed analysis of the making of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (Norman Taurog, 1938). This latter exhibit included production notes, documents from the talent search, research material, costumes, censorship material, and critical responses to the film itself. The show had been initially mounted back in New York, months before the film's release.<sup>46</sup>

The overall response to the American exhibit was lukewarm. Many of the paintings and sculptures were deemed poor derivatives of their European predecessors. Importantly, film and architecture proved to be the exceptions to this criticism; both exhibits met with unqualified enthusiasm. One commentator went so far as to claim that he would “give all the paintings in the United States for a few meters of American films.”<sup>47</sup> In a memo written to John Marshall, Abbott reported that the film portion of the exhibit was so successful that the museum had to hire three guards to “hold people back from the movie shows themselves. The exhibition on the production of American films had created something of a furor.”<sup>48</sup>

There were unanticipated benefits to the *Jeu de Paume* show, which provided occasion for otherwise unlikely encounters. It was during this exhibition that discussions to form FIAF were more fully generated. Heads of emerging film archives traveled to Paris to see the show, discussing among themselves, and also with Barry, the desirability of further collaboration.<sup>49</sup> Only months later, the FIAF was officially launched from the Film Library’s New York office. Other paths also converged, notably those of Siegfried Kracauer and Barry. Kracauer was exiled from Germany and living in Paris, making his way as a freelance writer. His émigré friends had written to him about MoMA’s film project and encouraged him to seek out Barry as someone who might help him leave Europe for the United States. Apparently the meeting was productive. Kracauer wrote a favorable review of the film exhibit; Barry returned to New York and successfully brokered a Rockefeller Foundation grant to provide Kracauer with employment at the museum.<sup>50</sup> The *Jeu de Paume* program, then, was a notable success. American films won critical continental recognition; they had also earned valuations that placed them well above their more traditional and established art-world counterparts. Future archival and scholarly collaborations gained a foothold.

On the whole, the program must have seemed a flurry of visual cues and distant memories. Such anthologies—while commonplace now—were a new and unusual genre, used powerfully by the Film Library to gesture not only toward film’s past but also toward the ways in which such films resonate as popular and personal memory. With the *Jeu de Paume* exhibit, the Film Library both fortified its European network and earned the international legitimation so important to the trustees. Barry, long aware of the American influence on French film and the familiarity of the French public, artists, and art patrons with American film, quickly capitalized on these circumstances. Referring to the Film Library’s success in articles published in the museum bulletins, Barry continued to further substantiate the impor-

tance of the Film Library within the museum community. She firmly reminded museum members that with its achievements in film and in architecture, “the United States was seen at its most original, most exuberant, most enjoyable, [and] most understandable.” The film, she claimed, was the liveliest and most popular of contemporary arts and one in which the United States is “supreme.”<sup>51</sup> She argued not only for the importance of film in the international modern art scene but also for the importance of specifically American, popular films within that scene. Barry’s continued pleas suggest that the general resistance to film among museum trustees and patrons persisted. The Film Library, at least during these crucial early years, remained the awkward, “adopted” museum child.

It is important to note the persistent calls for recognition of film within the museum, evidenced by Barry’s resort to traditional assumptions about aesthetic worth and high-cultural validation. Yet it is equally important to note that several trustees and other influential museum personalities did openly—if only occasionally—support the Film Library and its general aims. The contributions of John Hay Whitney have already been mentioned. Additionally, in a radio show entitled “Why a Museum of Modern Art Has a Film Department,” aired on an NBC affiliate in 1935, Edward Warburg attempted to explain the project to a wide public. Two years before the Film Library was established, Alan Blackburn had addressed the National Board of Review, stepping down from the predominant mode of high-aesthetic justification for the library by announcing: “We are not primarily interested in the so-called artistic pictures; we are not primarily interested in ‘arty’ photography. We are interested in the picture you see every time you go to a motion picture house, in the commercial product mainly and chiefly.”<sup>52</sup> Further, several important figures with close ties to the museum, such as Nelson Rockefeller, Lewis Mumford, and Lincoln Kirstein, were listed as members of the short-lived and closely linked New York Film Society. Kirstein had founded the well-known little magazine *Hound and Horn*, which published many articles on the cinema, written by himself as well as by Harry Potamkin, Jere Abbot, Barr, and Russel T. Hitchcock. Years later, Kirstein went on to help found the short-lived journal *Films* (1939–41) with Leyda and others.<sup>53</sup> Mumford’s interest in cinema was an outgrowth of his interest in the relations among technology, art, and modern life. In his now-classic book, *Technics and Civilization*, he referred favorably to films by Charlie Chaplin, René Clair, Walt Disney, Robert Flaherty, and Sergei Eisenstein, gesturing dismissively toward Hollywood’s “gross diversion” of cinema away from expressing a “modern world picture” and toward sentimentality and sensationalism.<sup>54</sup> These few

individuals, however, provide the exception that proves the rule. Trustees, on the whole, remained suspicious about the basic idea that film could indeed be an art worthy of their time or attention. As a result, they were largely presented with elaborate treatises on nascent critical communities, American international influence, and instances of authorial/directorial genius.

#### ENDOWING HOLLYWOOD HISTORY

Industry representatives had long played a variety of roles in the formation of film institutions that preceded the Film Library. Will Hays was a prominent figure in many such projects. From early on in his tenure as head of the MPPDA, he argued for establishing a Motion Pictures Division in the National Archives, whose construction was under discussion in Washington. Hays lobbied for a national film collection that would contain footage of historically significant events, including presidential inaugurations, state funerals, military battles, and public ceremonies.<sup>55</sup> Although the National Archives was under construction by 1926, the inclusion of films within it was not officially secured until 1934, and their acquisition did not get under way until January 1935. Hays and others worked for eleven years to ensure that films of American “historical activities” would be preserved. They could not, however, guarantee adequate funding for this project. Donations to the archive trickled in throughout the latter half of the thirties from government agencies and the film industry alike. For its part, the MPPDA pursued its commitment to the national archive by offering prints deemed to be of “historic interest” (mostly newsreels) to the archive’s collection of educational and news films, winning an opportunity to prove its commitment to national well-being. Servicing the national record was one way to establish the industry’s contribution to official public knowledge. Film’s historical value was organized primarily to reflect national accomplishments and secondarily to bolster the public image of the film industry generally. Importantly, the MPPDA carefully ensured that a historical record would not in any way interfere with exhibition revenues. The archive did not intend to become an educational exhibitor. In these early years it functioned largely as a repository.<sup>56</sup>

With discussions about the role of film in the National Archives under way, Hays was also busy winning recognition for the industry from reputable and elite East Coast institutions. In 1927, a group of Harvard professors—in association with the Department of Fine Arts, the Fogg Museum,



and the university's library—set out to obtain and preserve films past and present as essential contributions to “the cultural development of the country” and as foundational elements in any “serious historical and technical study of the arts.”<sup>57</sup> Film selection was based largely on aesthetic criteria, in contrast to the plans of the National Archives in Washington. Ten to twelve films were to be chosen from the previous year's releases. The selection committee used literature and lists published by the National Board of Review and several other publications to effect their decisions.<sup>58</sup> Hays brokered the required agreements with the industry.

Reactions to this undertaking were mixed. W. A. Macdonald noted in the *Boston Transcript* the unlikely pairing of the “low-brow” and “magnificent” industry with the elite cultural custodians of the “red brick college,” calling it “strange” and even “sensational.”<sup>59</sup> The Harvard archive was a coup in the industry's quest to be acknowledged by the financial and cultural establishment. The project grew out of a well-known series of lectures held at the Harvard Business School, organized by Joseph Kennedy and featuring industry power brokers such as Jesse Lasky, Adolph Zukor, William Fox, Samuel Katz, Cecil B. DeMille, and others. As owner and president of Film Booking Offices, Kennedy himself spoke. Hays also participated in the event, facilitating the discussions culminating in the Harvard Film Library plan. His involvement with the Harvard project confirms the place of the industry in forwarding cultural projects involving film. Through the course and the library, the industry extended its reach and shaped the activities of other institutions, using its powerful resource base, which included not only money but also copy and exhibition rights over films. A key aspect of the agreement demonstrates the nature of this influence and the limits of its benevolence. The films were to be chosen *only* from American offerings. Further, they would not be shown to audiences beyond those composed of university members or their guests. No admission would be charged. Any exception to these rules would, by the very constitution of the library, be negotiated with the industry on a case-by-case basis.<sup>60</sup> While the studios agreed to donate prints of selected films, they were extremely guarded about the possibility of allowing exhibition of the prints, extending their control and containing the expansion of film's exhibition generally. Donating films to a museum was clearly one aspect of a project to legitimate industry commitment to civic projects in history and art but in a highly controlled way. Offering exhibition and, therefore, revenue-generating rights to an expanded public was an entirely different matter. As with the National Archives project, the studios seemed far more interested in the authority and respectability the Fogg Museum might

confer on their distinctly American products simply because it held them, and much less interested in the broader cultural mandate to make more kinds of films more widely available for specialized exhibition. Regardless, the Harvard plan did not achieve sustained success. Only several years later, the Fogg's films were promised to MoMA.<sup>61</sup>

The industry's role in MoMA's formation was no less tainted with its impulses toward self-preservation and narrow self-interest. From early on, the Film Library staff sought to establish links to the industry and to those who might generally lend the project legitimacy and, most important, resources. From the first official proposal for establishing the library, studio executives in particular were considered an integral part of the plan. Staff adopted many strategies to win their support, writing letters, delivering speeches, and placing articles in the industry press. Barry and Abbott solicited advice from prominent industry personalities. Indeed, one of the earliest ideas—conceived by Abbott—for securing permanent library funding was to form a board composed of notable industry members who, it was hoped, would provide a source of stable income.<sup>62</sup> Though the advisory board that was eventually formed hosted neither the celebrities nor the funding that Abbott imagined it would, invitations were nonetheless offered to serve on what was called the Film Library Advisory Committee, established in March 1936.

Industry notables constituted the bulk of the committee. Among them was Will Hays, who was initially unfriendly or “lukewarm” toward the Film Library's general aims. An internal memo suggests that he acquiesced to the idea only upon being assured that the library intended to confine its distribution to colleges and museums. Because the library would clearly be restricted to what were considered unprofitable venues, he is reported to have offered the “active cooperation of his office,” which included his own token membership on this committee.<sup>63</sup> Other members were Stanton Griffis (chairman of the executive board of Paramount Pictures), Jules Brulatour (Eastman Kodak's Hollywood representative), and J. Robert Rubin (vice president of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer). Also on the committee were David H. Stevens (Rockefeller Foundation) and Erwin Panofsky (professor of fine arts, Princeton University). Stevens, an established figure in the philanthropic world, provided representation for the vested interests of the Rockefeller Foundation. Panofsky was by this time a well-known art historian who not long after the foundation of the Film Library delivered a lecture at the most established of American museums, the Metropolitan Museum of Art. His lecture received attention in the press partly because of its unusual subject matter: film as art.<sup>64</sup> The committee met irregularly and

infrequently, primarily functioning as a way for Abbott or Barry to announce Film Library successes to those who might help further its status and widen its support.

The advisory committee provided a necessary formal link between the library staff, the Rockefeller Foundation, and members of the industry, but on the whole it yielded few concrete benefits. Many of the collaborations that were discussed simply did not develop to fruition or were blatantly self-serving to particular segments of the industry. For instance, in an effort to help the Film Library create a source of revenue, Charles Bonn of Eastman Kodak suggested that the library produce a film illustrating how celluloid is made and how sound-recording devices operate so that MoMA could sell or distribute the film to classrooms.<sup>65</sup> Hays and Rubin encouraged the library to make films that celebrated American film history and technique, which might then gain industry support and distribution.<sup>66</sup> Discussions of such a film continued, resulting in a script, written by Paul Rotha. At the last minute, however, Hays withdrew support both for production and for distribution assistance.<sup>67</sup> As compensation he offered a future cash donation, resulting in the only official contribution made by the industry during the library's first ten years.<sup>68</sup>

One reason for keeping the industry close to the Film Library's activities was to make it seem less suspicious and more complementary to rather than competitive with standard industry practices. If American films were to be collected and exhibited, the cooperation of film producers who held copy and exhibition rights was essential to the Film Library's success. Although celebrities and even film directors could lend public appeal and glamour to library activities without legal consent from film producers, MoMA had little chance of succeeding. In August 1935, months before the advisory committee was formed, and only weeks after the library's formation, Barry and Abbott traveled to Hollywood to plead their case directly. Whitney supplied letters of introduction. Despite spending a full six weeks on the West Coast, Barry and Abbott had little success.<sup>69</sup> The only clear mark remaining of this trip is the gathering of film personalities and industry notables at Pickfair, the estate Mary Pickford once shared with Douglas Fairbanks. Whitney initiated the event, convincing Pickford to play hostess. Guests were described by one newspaper as representing "every major producing organization in Hollywood."<sup>70</sup> Reported attendees were a mixed group, with the core consisting primarily of producer-directors: Harold Lloyd, Samuel Goldwyn, Nell Ince (wife of Thomas Ince), Jesse Lasky, Walt Disney, Walter Wanger, Sol Lesser, Mervyn LeRoy, Merriam C. Cooper, Kenneth MacGowan, Ernst Lubitsch, Louis D. Lighton,



FIGURE 9. Pickfair event, 1935. *Left to right:* Frances Howard (wife of Samuel Goldwyn), John E. Abbott, Samuel Goldwyn, Mary Pickford, Jesse L. Lasky, Harold Lloyd, and Iris Barry. Courtesy of the Department of Film and Media, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Harry Cohn, and others.<sup>71</sup> Hays also attended. Barry, Abbott, Hays, and Pickford prepared speeches for the event (figure 9).

Special program notes were prepared, and the purpose of the presentation was declared: "To make known the work of the newly established Museum of Modern Art Film Library." The printed program reiterated the mission statement of the Film Library, emphasizing the Rockefeller Foundation's support, as well as the library's strictly "non-commercial" mandate. Strangely, no mention was made of Whitney's financial contributions. The title above the films listed on the program read: "Motion Pictures of Yesterday and Today." Barry screened a carefully selected series of excerpts from early and current American films gathered locally. Each film title was accompanied by a brief note explaining the clip's significance, which ranged from an early use of the close-up to Chaplin's comic inventiveness in the famous "bun" sequence from *The Gold Rush* (Charles Chaplin, 1925). Significantly, the printed program also included the then-

unusual practice of registering production dates beside the film's titles. The clips were projected in chronological order. Of the seven excerpts shown, two featured or were conceived by guests in attendance: Mary Pickford in *The New York Hat* (D. W. Griffith, 1912) and Walt Disney's *Pluto's Judgment Day* (David Hand, 1935). Other films featured were the *Irwin-Rice Kiss* (Edison, 1896); *The Great Train Robbery* (Edison, 1903); and a historical pageant produced by William Selig entitled *The Coming of Columbus* (1912). The absence of D. W. Griffith's canonical works *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Intolerance* (1916) is noteworthy if only because the films' place in MoMA's curatorial practices would soon take such prominence. It is possible that Barry and Abbott were unable to obtain this Griffith footage for the event, although there are no remaining records to support this.

The crowd's interest was reportedly piqued by the clear changes cast in relief by the ordering of these clips. From the single-shot depiction of a kiss to the gravity-defying tomfoolery of Disney's Pluto, audience members discussed the formal changes made so evident by this program, even since their own introduction to the medium. For instance, they noted that dialogue was kept to a minimum in early sound experiments, whereas current productions were more likely to be thick with dialogue.<sup>72</sup> Most significant, however, was the screening of *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Lewis Milestone, 1930), a film in which the recently deceased Louis Wolheim appeared. Barry wrote: "There was a tiny, shocked gasp at the first appearance of Louis Wolheim in the program's brief excerpt from *All Quiet on the Western Front*: he had been dead so very short a time. Was fame so brief?"<sup>73</sup>

Many players viewed that night had been extras in early films and had since become famous: Mae Marsh, Lillian Gish, Lionel Barrymore, and "Broncho Billy" Anderson. Many were personally known to those in the audience. Some had fallen from public view. Playing on the ephemeral nature of film exhibition—silent and sound—Barry inadvertently appealed to audience members' intimate attachment to film images. Their own youth flashed before them on the screen, as did fellow actors recently deceased. Fame suddenly seemed inextricably linked to these otherwise ephemeral images long unseen. Barry described the screening as invoking tears and deep reflection, suggesting that those in the audience had been shocked into recognizing the fleeting nature of their own relationship to film.<sup>74</sup> They were reminded of a time and a place forever gone; both seemingly passed as quickly as these films. Bringing the unnecessarily short life of films to the fore, projecting film time onto real time, Barry suggested that film time need not be so brief. By exhibiting a selection of silent films,

the Film Library also became a way by which the fame engendered by the silent cinema might be preserved, a fame threatened with evisceration by the sound revolution of several years previous.

The speech Barry prepared for this occasion also provides telling insights into her planning for the Pickfair event. Her skilled maneuvering around the problem of celebrity vanity and the fear of commercial competition suggests at least partial awareness of the task that faced her. Moreover, the very novelty of *studying films* as well as calling film “art” had to be made intelligible to this group. She began: “A rather awkward and even dangerous task has been given me, for I have been asked to say something of what we mean by ‘the art of the motion picture.’ How exactly can we arrange for people to study films seriously? What are these mysterious programs we speak of arranging? What are we, in heaven’s name, going to *do* with the films you give us?”<sup>75</sup> Barry confronted head-on the resistance to old films being shown again, devoting considerable time to softening the edge of the common response to such films: laughter. During this period, old films found new utility, reedited and compiled into farcical shorts that, among other things, cast earlier cinematic conventions in comic relief.<sup>76</sup>

Barry attempted to convince those present that Film Library exhibitions were different, purposefully designed not to evoke such distasteful responses. If laughter did occur, she assured them, it would simply be an expression, albeit surprising, of the love of films: “If there *is* laughter when the old films are shown as *we* plan to show them, it is and will be affectionate and understanding laughter, not derision—as indeed we here tonight have laughed and chuckled in affection.”<sup>77</sup> She punctuated this with the seriousness of the library’s endeavor, a basic theme of her negotiations with producers: “Remember, the films are not to be shown as entertainment, but strictly as classroom or extra-curricular courses under the auspices of universities, colleges and museums. They will be presented seriously, as part of the regular education in the history and appreciation of art.”<sup>78</sup> Barry drew a sharp line between “serious” film viewing and entertainment-driven film viewing. The objective was to construe the library as a nonprofit venture. This required projecting a carefully crafted and somewhat unfamiliar kind of film viewing: “strictly” educational. Dissociating MoMA’s film exhibitions from entertainment, fortifying the overly familiar dichotomies of pleasure and study, profit and loss, became a key strategy for securing industry support. Importantly, she implored industry representatives to recognize that studying films would only increase enthusiasm for and appreciation of motion pictures. In short, she argued that educational film viewing would increase box office revenue.

Abbott's speech at Pickfair complemented Barry's perfectly, further emphasizing the importance of honoring the industry with museological respectability and studious attention. He legitimated the idea of film study by asserting the intense interest in the library among men and women "of highest standing in the academic and educational world throughout this country." Addressing the Pickfair guests as a knowing audience, he further called upon the temporal contradictions inherent in the concept of artistic value:

There have been those who have said to us—but none of them in Hollywood—why should a museum want to collect Westerns and early Biographs? That is not art. That was only an ephemeral entertainment and merits no consideration. We have answered them as you would expect. Such people are short-sighted. They seem to believe that art is something apart from life, already consecrated in museums and—above all—something which the common man cannot enjoy. They are the sort of people who refused to accept Wagner until after he was dead and could write no more music. They are the sort of people who despised lithography, when the great French artist, Daumier, used the new medium for his astounding lithographs day by day in the newspapers of Paris. They are the same sort of people who now despise the film—but go into aesthetic raptures over Wagner's music and Daumier's lithographs.<sup>79</sup>

Films were construed as an art of prescience and of the people. Their study could be serious but need not replicate the pretense found in the examination and appreciation of the traditional arts. Film study was about understanding a new art, valued as a living form, regardless of its mode of exhibition, method of reproduction, or size of audience.

Both Abbott and Barry closed their speeches with somewhat obsequious appeals to industry dominion. For instance, Barry concluded:

And now last: consider, when we are all of us gone, both those of us who launched this museum enterprise, and those of you who have created the motion picture—when all of us are gone, the museum's Film Library will still be there, the films that you give us will still be there to constitute, in so far as anything in this world can be lasting, a lasting memorial to the art of the motion picture, and to the men and women who laid its foundations and carried it to its present power.<sup>80</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the Film Library was sold as an enduring monument to industry accomplishment, a shrine to its preeminence, and a promise of its enduring position. The Film Library, in other words, was sold as a mirror to Hollywood's own vanity and ambition.<sup>81</sup> While references to film art were made throughout the presentation to the Pickfair group, these remained

vague and inextricably linked to the idea of saving films as historical records. Conspicuously little mention was made of the library's equally important designs on non-American, experimental, or independent films or of the possibility that film study might actually provide critical insights into Hollywood products and practices.

Like most events in Hollywood, the Pickfair event was widely reported in well over forty newspapers coast to coast. Its coverage was aided by Louella Parsons's nationally syndicated gossip column, which featured the event. Headlines, touting the novelty and historical import of the project, read: "Movie Celebrities View Old time 'Thrillers,'" "Museum Niche for Silents: Films That Made History Shown at 'Pickfair,'" and "History-Making Films Chosen for N.Y. Museum of Modern Art."<sup>82</sup> Trade papers reported the unmitigated enthusiasm and support of Hollywood.<sup>83</sup> The source of this ostensible support was confirmed by a press release, issued by the Film Library itself.<sup>84</sup> The majority of trade and popular press coverage of the Film Library project, catalyzed by the Pickford visit, was either descriptive or outright positive. The one readily identifiable exception to this response was that of exhibitors, who remained suspicious about the competition the Film Library's programs might provide.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, two weeks later, *Variety* reported that "over 2,000,000 ft of old films, the celluloid history of Hollywood," had been taken back to New York.<sup>86</sup> *Motion Picture Daily* reported that the Film Library had acquired more than one million feet of film.<sup>87</sup> Regardless of the inconsistent accounting, the event appeared a success. Harold Lloyd promised access to everything he had. Mary Pickford presented a token print of *The New York Hat*.

In reality, Barry elicited few pledges of support but many raised eyebrows. Despite the fanfare and the announcements of unconditional support, she later admitted that neither she nor Abbott had put their case to one of the big producer-distributor companies. Louis B. Mayer—noted for his priorities, business over culture—proved to be particularly immune to their charm.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, no directors or actors could help them gain access to films except for the very few who controlled rights to their own material. Years later, Barry wrote:

This visit proved vastly agreeable but was, in a sense, a wild goose chase. We soon realized that, perhaps understandably, no one there cared a button about "old" films, not even his own last-but-one, but was solely concerned with his new film now in prospect. Some thought we wanted to do good to long-suffering children by showing them things like *The Lost World*, which of course was not the case. Some certainly



thought that we stood for some kind of racket. And what was "modern art"?<sup>89</sup>

Barry identified the suspicion and ignorance made evident by the Film Library's activities. Film was a product. Old films were objects of oddity, charity, or get-rich-quick schemes. The relationship of film to the questions of high culture, enduring value, and study implied by the museum remained unclear; the Film Library's relationship to the emerging body of nonrepresentational modern art made the library's goals doubly suspect.

It may be true that MoMA's film project was "some kind of racket." But, if so, it maintains a decided contrast to the rackets institutionalized by Hollywood. Studios demonstrated a well-documented appropriation of foreign film styles. They aggressively imported both European filmmakers steeped in modernist film movements and actors who were similarly trained; MGM had just recently added *ars gratia ars* (art for art's sake) to its trademark roaring lion. The studios cloaked their marketing campaigns for select films in the language of established literary and theatrical traditions. Clearly, particular discourses and institutions of art were suitable to the needs of the American film industry; others were not. Hollywood executives on the whole remained resistant and mostly unwilling to associate their work with MoMA's internationalist and seemingly elite project. Presumably, such affiliation would have compromised the delicate balance they attempted to strike between mass appeal, on the one hand, and middle-class respectability, on the other. Undergirding both was an unpaid debt to European modernism. Thus, if museological ideas about modern art were antithetical to properly democratic, American cinematic values, then any official endorsement of foreign art was an anathema.<sup>90</sup>

Expanding industry unfriendliness to the Film Library were film exhibitors who feared encroachment upon their lucrative territory.<sup>91</sup> Further evidence of anxiety was apparent in the complementary tone of comfort found in industry literature. The *Motion Picture Herald* assured theater owners that their box office would not suffer because the Film Library was, in the end, dependent on, beholden to, and thus controlled by the industry. Producers' anxieties were similarly assuaged. The *Herald* suggested that they need not worry about the "new cultural appreciation" having an influence on the standards under which they produce films for the "masses." "Study is limited to films taken out of theatrical circulation, by class study groups in attendance at colleges or museums sponsoring 'strictly non-commercial' exhibitions."<sup>92</sup> Saving films was one thing; exhibiting and studying them was entirely another, confined to very particular institutional sites and ultimately constrained by the industry itself.

In her more candid moments, Barry summarized the Pickfair event somewhat more directly than was possible in her official capacity as curator and emissary. She wrote:

We had learned our lesson. Potentates and powers were based in strict law and real money. The true heart of the industry (not an art but an industry) resided in the banks and/or downtown New York. We had been ignorant, perhaps slaphappy, but now we knew, had got the idea. Hollywood was simply the place where films were manufactured but as merchandise—and they were in that sense no more than that—the trading place and the real guts of the business was in the eastcoast.<sup>93</sup>

Barry recognized that the bulk of control of feature films rested with studio lawyers in New York, primarily concerned with maximizing profit by treating films as legal abstractions rather than complex cultural ones. Access to old films, therefore, required an agreement ensuring that no infringement would be made on studio coffers and that the Film Library's exhibition practices would not in any way detract from commercial exhibition revenues. Old films had to be first divested of their profitability and second attached to a vague public or civic purpose in order to secure the legal ground upon which the library's project could proceed at all. As such, in October 1935, Barry successfully brokered the first North American legal definition of nonprofit, feature film exhibition. Studio lawyers agreed that after two years a film's commercial run would no longer be threatened by the Film Library's project.<sup>94</sup> Once this period had passed, a film would be allowed to enter the archive and, upon negotiation, the Film Library's exhibition programs. For the cost of a print made at the library's expense from negatives held by the respective studio, these films would be used for educational and noncommercial purposes. Any formal group whose expressed mandate was to study films for one purpose or another could access this collection on the condition that admission to films was gained by virtue of membership rather than purchase of tickets. No admission could be charged for the viewings.

Crucially, while the library in general acted as a catalyst for the formation of expanded film-viewing circuits, nothing guaranteed sustained access to its films. The copyright holder reserved the right to pull a film from the museum's circulation program if it deemed fit; a permanent program would always be susceptible to industry whim. A lasting material infrastructure was secured, however, by nonprofit arrangements for the supply of raw materials and services made with Eastman Kodak for film stock, with RCA-Victor Manufacturing Company for sound recording, and with DeLuxe Laboratories for film processing.<sup>95</sup> While raw materials and basic

services were made available, finding images to fix to the growing infrastructure, generated at one remove from copyright holders, came with heavy constraints, high cost, and considerable compromise.

The inflated fanfare of the Pickfair event aside, the legal agreement did expedite the acquisition of some films. Almost immediately, the Lloyd donation and a Warner Brothers acquisition were announced. Shortly thereafter, additional films were procured from Samuel Goldwyn, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Twentieth Century-Fox, Paramount Pictures, Mary Pickford, and Walt Disney. Noteworthy titles included *Safety Last!* (Harold Lloyd, 1923); *The Jazz Singer* (Alan Crosland, 1927); *Public Enemy* (William Wellman, 1931); *Stella Dallas* (Henry King, 1925); *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Lewis Milestone, 1930); *The Covered Wagon* (James Cruze, 1923); *Skeleton Dance* (Ub Iwerks, 1929); *The Sex Life of a Polyp* (UK, Thomas Chalmers, 1928); and *A Fool There Was* (Frank Powell, 1915). Ironically, one of the most celebrated figures in the Film Library's pantheon, D. W. Griffith, outright refused to support the library's project, exclaiming that nothing could convince him that film had anything to do with art.<sup>96</sup> Charlie Chaplin was another notable holdout.

Along with the donation of these select films, individual statements of support were issued by studio executives, including Samuel Goldwyn, Carl Laemmle (president of Universal Pictures), Sidney P. Kent (president of Twentieth Century-Fox), John Otterson (president of Paramount Pictures), and Walt Disney, as well as by Hays, Lloyd, and Pickford. These statements were issued through Film Library press releases.<sup>97</sup> Unsurprisingly, industry personalities largely avoided direct association of their films or the Film Library's project with high-cultural discourses of genius, formal innovation, or aesthetic accomplishment. Rather, the vaguely educational and equally unformulated historical value of the library was foregrounded. Some even construed the Film Library as the historical arm of Hollywood itself, celebrating its service to the great industry. Harry Warner exclaimed: "An authentic record of the growth and development of the motion picture industry is, I feel, highly desirable, and I wish you all success in your enterprise."<sup>98</sup>

Pickford's sentiment was not significantly different. Despite her infamous proclamation that "when she went, her films would go with her," she proved forthcoming, offering her gratitude as well as a few of her early films: "As one of the pioneers of the industry let me say once again how much I appreciate the efforts of the Film Library. I am one of its staunch supporters and believe the preservation of significant and outstanding films to be of great historic and educational value. I am only sur-

prised that this important work was not undertaken long ago by the industry itself."<sup>99</sup>

Upon donating a copy of King Vidor's *Stella Dallas* (1925) and *The Night of Love* (1927), Samuel Goldwyn announced:

Apart from the purely entertainment side of motion pictures, they have become for this century, as have books and paintings in the past, a living picture of the world and as such should be guarded zealously as a Gainsborough portrait or a Gutenberg Bible. They are an accurate portrayal of contemporary times, presenting as they do not only the factual evidence of modern existence, but presenting it in visual form. I am very proud indeed to have my pictures included in this splendid movement and feel that the museum justifies my contention that really fine motion pictures are not only great entertainment but also graphic pages in the living history of a great era.<sup>100</sup>

Often avoiding the association of their films with art, those who made such statements aligned donated films with an explicitly historical rather than a high-aesthetic project, neatly avoiding the taint of "art." Feature films were described as "accurate portrayals," "factual evidence," and "graphic pages in living history." Importantly, films could be both entertaining and valuable pieces of historical evidence simultaneously. Both characteristics worked together; their association was designed to lend credibility not only to the library's project but also to the industry itself. It seems that Barry was aware of the propensity among industry members to emphasize the historical over the artistic. While actively advocating for support of the Film Library in industry publications, she continued to use this rhetoric. Cleverly titling an article in the Screen Actors Guild bulletin "So You Are in a Museum," she wrote: "The chief purpose of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library—established in 1935 through a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation—is to create an awareness of tradition and history within the new art of the film."<sup>101</sup> In this article, film art remained a vague and loose subconcept of the more general and less objectionable idea of "film history and tradition."

The Film Library struggled to win financial support from the industry, constructing itself as an indispensable arm of its publicity efforts. In a memo signed by John Abbott sent to the MPPDA, the library's numerous services to the industry were detailed. These included holding special screenings for filmmakers; use of its resources by members of studio publicity departments and other production units (Twentieth Century-Fox, RKO, Warner Bros., March of Time, Pathé, MGM, Paramount, United Artists, Movietone News, Selznick International Pictures); providing stills to journalists and

writers publishing articles on Hollywood films; and even holding special exhibitions to groups such as the American Library Association, the Parent-Teacher Association, and the Daughters of the American Revolution. Abbott also called attention to the publicity function served by the Film Library programs, asserting that the library's educational film screenings had done much to instill sustained interest in motion pictures through study, estimating an audience of more than one million eager students. Because films were exhibited "on an equal footing with paintings, sculpture or architecture," Abbott suggested, the museum's collaboration with Hollywood notables had "created a noticeable feeling of good-will throughout the country towards the film industry as a whole," helping to break down the prejudice against the motion picture among educators and "uplift groups." Abbott concluded this request for support by proclaiming MoMA a shop window for its (the industry's) best and most enduring achievements.<sup>102</sup>

Evidence suggests that despite these persistent efforts to win financial support, the American film industry contributed only sparingly to the library's activities. Usually this came in the form of select prints for special exhibitions or negatives offered temporarily for striking prints. Occasional public relations assistance was also offered. For instance, in 1938 the library was given a special "Distinctive Achievement" Academy Award for its work in collecting film and "for the first time making available the public means of studying the historical and aesthetic development of the motion picture." Celebrities made sporadic appearances in publicity photos. Yet even this support came at a considerable price, as Hays—at least occasionally—used his power to contain library activities, particularly those committed to the exhibition of non-American or potentially controversial films. At the first meeting of the Film Library Advisory Board, Hays warned those present that library programs should avoid what he termed "propaganda."<sup>103</sup> He explicitly identified an exhibition of films held merely days earlier in Washington as unacceptable. The May 10, 1936, program, presented at the Mayflower Hotel, consisted of six documentary films assembled by the Film Library, including *Triumph of the Will* (Leni Riefenstahl, 1934, excerpt); *The Face of Britain* (Paul Rotha, 1935); *The Color Box* (Len Lye, GPO, 1935); *The Plow That Broke the Plains* (Pare Lorentz, Resettlement Administration, 1936); and *Midi* (Jean Dréville, French State Railways, 1935).<sup>104</sup> Local papers reported on the invitation-only event by paying special attention to the distinguished audience, which consisted of members of the Supreme Court, the cabinet, and Congress. Articles also referred to the novelty of this new form of cinema. Documentaries, the articles reported, were a much more highly developed genre in European

countries than in the United States. Passing mention was given to the ideological leanings of Riefenstahl's film. Lorentz's film received the most sustained and laudatory commentary.<sup>105</sup> Nonetheless, Hays asserted that the *Mayflower* show was precisely the kind of exhibition—one that showed films not made by Hollywood—that would not receive industry sanction. Moreover, he blustered, excepting under the pressure of a special request, it could “hardly be justified in the work of the Film Library.”<sup>106</sup>

In the end, little real support ever came from Hollywood. Barry be-moaned this situation, at times using it to confront industry apathy directly. In 1946, through the pages of *Hollywood Quarterly*, she exclaimed: “No gift of money has ever been made, nor has even one \$1,000 life membership ever been subscribed by anyone in films, and in ten years only two contributions have been received from any film organization.”<sup>107</sup> Occasional celebrity appearances aside, it seems her efforts to cajole funds for the Film Library fell largely on deaf ears (figures 10 and 11).

#### THE PHILANTHROPIC FOUNDATIONS OF FILM STUDY

Without the funding supplied by the Humanities Division of the Rockefeller Foundation, the Film Library would not have been possible. Support for MoMA's project resulted from a marked shift in the Humanities Division's official mandate, which had recently been charged with reorienting funding away from “cloistered” research and toward individuals and organizations interested in “the obvious sources of influence of public taste today.”<sup>108</sup> The Rockefeller officers were encouraged to divert funds away from universities and scholars considered unfriendly to present-day concerns and socially useful knowledge and toward more relevant and engaged projects that would better serve “human thought and feeling.” New communications media such as radio, film, and the popular press were singled out as crucial parts of any such project. These media were collectively only beginning to receive measurable attention in universities during this period. The foundation was especially interested in research that explored contemporary media in relation to their ability to contribute to democratic models for education and to promote “a culture of the general mind.” The foundation was uninterested in censorship and unpersuaded by the effects-research growing out of projects such as the Payne Fund Studies. It was far more concerned to effect change in the manner in which people watched and understood movies, seeking to engender discrimination in film viewing. This, it was believed, would provide a defense against the deleterious



FIGURE 10. Gloria Swanson and Iris Barry at the Museum of Modern Art, 1941. Courtesy of the Department of Film and Media, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

influences of mass media and a corrective to the damaging effects of propaganda—commercial, foreign, and domestic.<sup>109</sup>

The Humanities Division, under the leadership of David Stevens and John Marshall, orchestrated many projects pertaining to media, particularly projects that formed the basis of communications research in the United States. These include the Princeton Radio Project; the Princeton Public Opinion Research Project; the Princeton Shortwave Listening Center; the Office of Radio Research at Columbia University; and the Totalitarian Communications Research Project at the New School for Social Research. Among the individual researchers who benefited from support



FIGURE 11. Joan Crawford and Iris Barry, ca. 1940. Courtesy of the Department of Film and Media, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

were Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Wilbur Shram, Norbert Wiener, and Gregory Bateson.<sup>110</sup> This shifted mandate also included considerable support for public institutions, libraries, museums, individual research projects, and community groups that would foster sustained engagement with the contemporary world.

As far as film is concerned, of course, influential Griersonian precedents were already operational in London and under development in Ottawa. Rockefeller officials were keenly aware of John Grierson's work with various projects to use documentary cinema. They considered such work in projects to fortify national identity and educate proper citizens in the United Kingdom prescient and sorely needed in America. Marshall's special interest in coordinating and furthering the civic possibilities of film education and educational film was evident in the concurrent funding of the American Film Center (AFC), headed by Donald Slesinger, founded in 1938 and based in Rockefeller Center in New York City. The film center



acted primarily as an information resource to educational film exhibitors, filmmakers, and public service agencies. In general, the AFC linked those who needed educational films with those interested in making them, providing coordination in the educational film field. Its initial mandate was broad and included several major goals: (1) research into audience habits and preferences, (2) facilitating cooperation among schools and adult education groups, and (3) assisting MoMA in forming a national network of film societies. Brett Gary reports, however, that the AFC primarily became embroiled in assisting with the needs of state agencies.<sup>111</sup> In addition to the AFC, the Rockefeller-funded General Education Board also supplied money to form the School Film Libraries Association and other projects to facilitate the use of films in public libraries, schools, and universities.<sup>112</sup> It is also important to note foundation support for film societies outside of the United States. Indeed, throughout the latter half of the 1930s, the foundation funded the growth of Canadian film societies, established on principles similar to those of MoMA's Film Library.<sup>113</sup> Collectively, these projects should be understood as linked closely to Marshall's vision for new models that productively paired media with public and general education. This impetus irrefutably influenced the shape taken by MoMA's Film Library. Its early exhibition programs as well as the scholarship conducted with its resources grew directly from Rockefeller mandates.

Initially, Marshall believed that MoMA provided the opportunity to fund an organization with aspirations of national significance that, like the AFC, sought to link educational organizations and institutions and to better develop educational distribution channels. He was less interested in film art or in art films than in finding film's civic place within projects to elevate standards of public engagement. His conception of film education included educating *with* film as well as *about* film.<sup>114</sup> Most important, Marshall was interested in generating a particular kind of film-viewing public. This audience was, he imagined, essential for eventually influencing the kinds of films available not just outside of movie theaters but inside them as well. Of the Film Library's project he wrote: "If it succeeds, it will organize a new audience for films much as the Carnegie Library organized a reading public which was previously non-existent. And, if such an audience exists for films that cannot now be shown theatrically, its existence should give substantial encouragement to the production of new films of educational and cultural value."<sup>115</sup> Following from this plain commitment to growing distribution and exhibition circuits, the foundation issued special onetime grants to the Film Library to fund targeted programs. For in-

stance, through 1935 and 1937, Jay Leyda was provided money by several grants to research and write program notes, to study the organization of film materials in the United States and Europe for loan and rental, and to help with developing the circulating educational programs of the library.<sup>116</sup> This was in addition to his research on Soviet film, also funded by the foundation.<sup>117</sup> Indeed, a great deal of the research generated at MoMA reflects the Rockefeller Foundation's interest in documentary film, as well as its investments in understanding contemporary media more generally. Marshall also issued grants to Kracauer to study at the Film Library, which culminated in the publication of his seminal sociopsychological study of Weimar and Nazi cinema, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*.<sup>118</sup> In 1937, Paul Rotha—well known for his role in the British documentary movement and his prodigious writing on film—visited the Film Library, also on a Rockefeller Grant, and delivered a series of lectures on documentary film methods and “the creative presentation of facts as we find them in everyday life.” He advocated that film could and should be used for combining aesthetic and civic experiments: fusing the cinematic with the citizen.<sup>119</sup>

The initial money donated by the foundation represented the bulk of library funds and—more problematically—was intended as a temporary seed grant. As such, Abbott and Barry needed to shape their future grant requests, and indeed the library itself, in accordance with Marshall's idea, which depended heavily on increasing public accessibility to library films and the means by which educational film viewing might be fostered. Abbott and Barry continually documented their activities in this field by highlighting their circulating programs and their program notes when corresponding with the foundation. An appendix to a 1937 report on the library's activities, authored by Abbott, articulated a role for the Film Library that fashioned it primarily as a national coordinator for educational film activities, with a view to growing a production house as well as a training school for filmmakers, a plan for the library unfamiliar to museum administrators.<sup>120</sup> Throughout their correspondence, Marshall pushed Barry and Abbott to target the creation of film study circuits. Marshall was well aware that the difficulties of accomplishing this were numerous and included the basic expense for museums, colleges, and study groups of both buying 16mm equipment and renting the library's programs. He nonetheless persisted.

By 1938, Marshall conceded that among all American organizations funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, the Film Library's activities were

“the most visible and important for organizing specialized audiences with tastes for classics, documentaries or non-entertainment driven films,” acknowledging their early success with creating an extensive specialized and educational service through traveling film programs.<sup>121</sup> Yet Marshall remained unsatisfied with the library’s progress, recommending that it hire a field agent to further explore opportunities for film study and to resolve persistent distribution problems. He also began to informally as well as formally pressure the library to gear its activities even more in this direction. Only two years into the foundation’s support for the library, he explicitly asked that money it gave in the future be channeled exclusively toward distributing films to educational institutions.<sup>122</sup>

The Film Library was encouraged to lower rental prices, to more actively work to form film societies, and to increase the number of touring lectures.<sup>123</sup> The library, according to the foundation, needed to increase its audience, partly, it reasoned, so that through film rentals it might become self-sufficient. Expanding the audience, it was believed, would also better ensure that the goals of fostering appreciation and influencing the kinds of film produced would be more likely to succeed. The library politely agreed with Marshall and focused more on the “effort to organize its potential audience” and to expand its educational work through course offerings in schools, colleges, and universities. This resulted in the hiring of Douglas Baxter, who was tasked with assessing and resolving MoMA’s distribution needs. His report indicated that the main barriers to increased screenings were lack of funds and equipment, objection to the inability to charge admission, and basic disinterest among the educational community.<sup>124</sup>

The Rockefeller Foundation was notably disinterested in sanctifying film art or in fortifying the Film Library as a singular site in which individual films would become cherished relics. It conceived of films less as objects and more as pedagogical activities that corresponded more effectively to the new mediated environments in which people lived. The Film Library was best seen as a method for mass education and as an early contributor to the formation of a national infrastructure to facilitate this. There is little evidence that either Marshall or any other foundation officer assumed close scrutiny of Film Library acquisitions in general or of individual films in particular, or that the foundation took any steps to control MoMA’s curatorial affairs or limit its internationalism. The idea of the specialized and engaged audience was the foundation’s primary and idealized abstraction. Posed against the mass, this audience was not one confined to the commercial movie theater but one transformed by newly coordinated mobile film programs that could be seen anywhere.

## SUMMARY JUDGMENTS

Film Library staff did not accept the proposition that film, in particular Hollywood films, deleteriously affected the very conditions in which art or even thinking spectatorship was possible at all. Nor did they accept the proposition, increasingly posed by American film critics, that European films were art films and American films were categorically inferior. Nevertheless, other sensibilities about film's value and its troubled association with particular definitions of art shaped a discursive project that cast these films differently for different constituencies. Film Library staff crafted a neglected American art tradition couched in the majesty of having influenced international modernist movements; this was offered defiantly to museum trustees. Industry members welcomed a mix of nostalgia and civic values, comforted by promises of their own importance to America's heritage. Film Library staff unapologetically configured their project as a shrine to the industry itself. The Rockefeller Foundation saw an expanding network of educational film programs. In the meantime, library staff slowly acquired films. The publics in which the Film Library implicated itself grew, and the library's resources facilitated an increasing amount of film scholarship. Within the convergence of strikingly different interests, some of the material traces of film's past surfaced. The Film Library served as a site of negotiation, compromise, and dialogue, demonstrating how different interests were accommodated in an emergent institutional form and how seemingly irreconcilable conceptions of film's significance were sustained through the real, rhetorical, and imagined activities of a film museum. In these early days, configuring the means by which films might be saved and seen at all was paramount.

By focusing on the library's internal documents and reports, it becomes evident that the various forms of film's value—aesthetic, historical, sociological, educational, financial—coexisted at MoMA. Library staff balanced seemingly irreconcilable conceptions of film's significance. The timeworn dichotomy between art films and commercial films—serious viewing and entertainment—itself is a part of this history. In the case of MoMA's Film Library, this history is implicated in a material and ideological struggle over preserving and, of course, shaping film history itself. It is also part of forging new legal and institutional ideals for cinema, wresting the control of its definition away from the constraints of singularly commercial imperatives. In other words, situating film art within a discursive and material politics of cultural practice demonstrates that the question of film's value has been actively shaped by a matrix of debates and procedures generated

by archives and museums. In the case of the Film Library, the term itself—*film art*—was strategically deployed in order to initiate and achieve the complex material and ideological goals of an emergent film institution. After the war, these debates took on a more rigid form as film art institutions grew and began to further organize around such distinctions as art cinema and commercial cinema, or foreign films and American films. The institutional history of the Film Library predates these organizations and thus sheds some light on the porosity of the concept of film art itself during this important period in film history; film art was marked more by heterogeneity and compromise rather than homogeneity and idealism. The irony is, of course, that the Film Library had little choice but to undertake negotiations in this manner. Not only was its funding base tenuous and the legal system built up around film unfriendly to nonprofit cultural or educational viewing, but honoring the history of film in all its contradictions necessarily implied inheriting the contradictions of film itself.

## 5 Rearguard Exhibition

### *The Film Library's Circulating Programs*

As a small and ill-fitting piece of the much larger museum puzzle, the Film Library lacked a secure foundation on which to grow. During its first four years, the library was not housed in the larger museum building and did not have its own theater. All other museum departments were located in an impressive three-story Rockefeller brownstone at 11 West Fifty-third Street, which only several years later would be torn down to make room for the much larger, iconic Goodwin-Stone building (1939). The young Film Library was structurally and spatially dislocated from other museum departments. Its finances were managed separately, its relationship to other museum operations seemed somewhat mysterious. Long the awkward cousin of the painting, sculpture, and even architecture and design departments, the Film Library conducted its activities from an office that was blocks away from the primary museum site. They used a storage closet as a screening room.

Establishing lasting museum sanction and ensuring continued support from the Rockefeller Foundation was—among all other things—dependent on substantiating library utility to each organization's respective ambitions. Because the library was largely funded by a grant from the noted philanthropy, satisfying the foundation's mandate and granting criteria—in this instance, creating an audience for educational film—became an immediate priority. Winning museum approval equally depended on adapting film library goals to the museum's aims. This included sanction of film art but also helping to transform the museum into a mobile and national educational institution. In other words, library staff had to find an audience in order to secure its place as a permanent rather than passing museum phase. Building a sustained infrastructure for film distribution and exhibition was imperative to this effort. Changing museum practice in

combination with the interests of the Rockefeller Foundation set a clear course for library action.

Finding an audience required showing movies. Yet exhibiting movies at MoMA during these early years entailed combining the mobile and populist logics long integral to cinema with the reverent and educational ideals of art exhibition. In short, the novelty of exhibiting moving images as art under the aegis of a museum required a relatively new approach to cinematic display. Basic things were unclear: Where to show the library's films? Audiences for museum movies could not be generated by simply projecting films on cramped office walls. More spacious art galleries, which tended to feature significant amounts of natural light, yielded dull and blurry images. Given the sizable expense, taking over a nearby picture palace or neighborhood theater was equally unfeasible. Because MoMA was still a relatively young institution, it lacked the large auditoriums long used by other museums for educational lectures, lantern slide shows, and film screenings. Legal agreements with the industry and various copyright holders enacted significant constraints and further complicated library success. Viewers of MoMA's programs had to qualify as members of identifiable educational organizations; charging admission was expressly forbidden.

As head curator of the library, Iris Barry worked hard to forge a department that functioned as a mobile and multipurpose classroom. Without even proper storage facilities, library staff began to organize screenings in makeshift theaters and auditoriums throughout the greater New York City area, as well as throughout the country. A range of film types constituted the primary means, methods, and objects subtending these efforts. Assembling a constantly expanding film collection into discrete two-hour packages, Barry and her staff grouped films loosely by theme, ordering them chronologically. Researched program notes were added, imbuing each exhibition with the signs of intentioned and intelligent viewing. Yet the ideal of an elite cine salon or an exclusive focus on sanctioned European directors was diffused within and across a wide field of library activities, which included distributing "great" films as well as industrial shorts and art-educational films.

If the library's early success would, in large part, be measured by its ability to realize an audience, it is important to note that this was not just any audience. Distinct from many of the documented efforts to forge an educational film scene during the 1930s, MoMA targeted the adult rather than the child audience, the strong rather than the vulnerable, the thinking rather than the emotional, the ruling rather than the raucous. Its efforts lacked the strong moralizing tone of what Lea Jacobs has called the "film

education movement" of this period. MoMA did not set out to save the virtue of young girls or to secure the moral fiber of troubled boys.<sup>1</sup> Film Library staff addressed a notably adult audience, conceived as responsible cultural citizens who were eager to know more and to think more fully about cinema, and to distinguish themselves from the entertainment-driven commercial culture of the movie theater. Through a range of discursive tactics, this new breed of spectator was invited to read program notes, to make links to other cultural forms and nations, and to discuss rationally the development and importance of cinema in shaping everyday language, fashion, and behavior. Spectators were called upon to do so on evenings, on weekends, and under the banner of clubs and societies that were urban and suburban, local and national.

This audience could not have been built simply by projecting films on screens or boldly declaring them art. Such efforts were entirely inadequate to the scale of the task. A range of strategies was required and consequently invoked. Key among them was a formidable presence of film library personalities and film discourses across a range of media. Regular articles in nationally distributed magazines and specialized journals, inexpensively reproduced pamphlets, daily press releases to newspapers, and appearances on radio programs were instrumental in realizing library goals. Throughout these media, library staff marshaled the fervor for self-improvement and adult education endemic to the 1930s, suggesting that knowing more about cinema was good—and plain—common sense. A dash of populism entered the mix. In short, finding an audience for art film was never only about films. Effecting this audience was a dynamic act of coordination and resource allocation, fully reliant upon a range of discourses. These media and the discourses promulgated through them constitute an expansive discursive horizon—what Miriam Hansen would call a bourgeois public sphere—through which the library's project was both furthered and tested.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps most important, these programs—combined with the press that surrounded them—constitute the most public and widespread interface for the emergent idea of film art, film history, film study, and specialized viewing. They also provide a very different kind of evidence of MoMA's significance than the internal memos and reports that were largely shared among a relatively small though powerful few. The library's expansive discursive network supplies another view to their efforts to generate historical and studious sensibilities for cinema. This public interface is a multidimensional one not wholly controlled by the library staff or the museum's publicity experts. It includes the comments of an emergent generation of film critics, city beat writers, and gossip columnists. It encompasses official



industry proclamations, celebrity announcements, and sometimes references to audience behavior and temperament. Collectively this evidence indicates that despite the internal rhetoric of serious viewing and enlightened spectators, and regardless of the library's persistent public announcements of the same, the widespread response to MoMA's films was often infused with nostalgia, the ideals of a distinctly American heritage, occasional mockery, and, most notably, the aura of lost relics discovered. The goals of critical study, aesthetic appreciation, and establishing a body of film-historical knowledge were often subsumed by a vague sense of American tradition, popular memories, irreverence, and the uncanny experience of seeing the old anew. Much to the chagrin of library staff, old films proved dreadfully and unavoidably quaint and frequently risible; responding to audience laughter became as common a task as checking film leader and cataloguing titles.

With the material challenges of either finding an extant audience or creating one, library staff above all needed to fill their programs with appealing content. Yet they did so with limited titles whose scope and number changed regularly. Nonetheless, this exercise began with several small experimental screenings that became the template for the themed chronologies that would shortly thereafter constitute the core logic of their exhibitions. The library's first screenings were held almost a year before its official formation at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut.<sup>3</sup> The program, entitled simply *The Motion Picture, 1914–1934*, ran over a series of several months, from October 28 through December 30, 1934, and consisted of ten evening showings. Each meeting was dedicated to a distinct theme, period, or national cinema, such as "The French Film," "The German Film," "Charlie Chaplin Films," and "The Sociological Film" (what we would now call social problem films). An evening was also dedicated to a selection of experimental, abstract, and animated films. The series was vaguely chronological, beginning with D. W. Griffith and ending with the talkies, filled with items selected from throughout the 1910s and 1920s. The show was accompanied by program notes that supplied brief historical information, chatty commentary, and occasionally a short yet unsupported set of claims to directorial "genius," aesthetic "masterpiece," or general "brilliance." Already evident are some of the Film Library's (and film history's) standard texts, including Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1910), Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*, (1925), Erich von Stroheim's *Foolish Wives* (1921), and F. W. Murnau's *Tabu* (1931). Also included were a British science film, *Slime Molds (The Myxomycetes, n.d.)*, and a Warner Bros. pro-New Deal, social problem film, William Wellman's *Wild Boys of the Road* (1933).

The museum's own official exhibitions of film programs initially began at its main building in January 1936, but within several weeks, a larger auditorium was needed. Programs were then shown at the Dalton School, a nearby Progressive school, for the remainder of that year. As of January 1937, until the opening of the museum's new, larger building in 1939, screenings were largely held in the Museum of Natural History's sizable auditorium. Admission was gained by special pass, issued to museum members only (figures 12 and 13).

Despite the many impediments to their project, Barry, Abbott, and their fledgling staff fed an emergent film-viewing circuit. Their film programs played locally but also circulated widely. After only one year of operation they reportedly sent programs to interested groups throughout the United States and Canada; 546 two-hour programs had been screened to 288,904 spectators. This audience grew steadily, and by 1940, they had captured an estimated annual audience of 385,819 (figure 14).<sup>4</sup> With no theater of its own until the summer of 1939, the Film Library created a sprawling, mobile theater constituted by prepackaged film programs (figure 15). Its emphasis was on the narrative film, though it also included early actuality films, as well as examples of the nonnarrative avant-garde.<sup>5</sup> MoMA's Film Library had effectively assembled the first self-contained, circulating programs designed specifically to facilitate the study of cinema. While distinct from the library's archival and scholarly activities, the film programs as well as the discourses that accompanied them were intimately linked to these activities; films were culled directly from the library's collection and accompanied by film notes written from resources held by the library. Moreover, the programs themselves bore the stamp of the Film Library and all it symbolically entailed. In addition to the program notes, the now infamous intertitles, usually inserted at the beginning of each film, contained production information and short comments about a film's historical importance or its influences. Such notes also functioned as the library's imprimatur. These briefings were conceived as a way of automating film education, as well as a strategy to imbue films with the majesty of museological space—a space the Film Library, ironically, lacked.

Library staff also curated a select number of gallery exhibits that did not involve screening films. These usually displayed production paraphernalia and film stills, mounted on walls and in display cases. Films featured in these exhibits included *You Only Live Once* (Fritz Lang, 1937) and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (Norman Taurog, 1937).<sup>6</sup> But it was the library's circulating programs that constituted the majority of its public intervention. These series changed slightly from year to year; as films became



FIGURE 12. Lecture at the American Museum of Natural History, 1916. Note the sizable screen and capacity of the auditorium. Courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History Library.



FIGURE 13. Elementary school children attending a lecture at the American Museum of Natural History, 1937. This same theater hosted MoMA's first film screenings. The adaptable projection booth had been designed to display images in many sizes and formats. Courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History Library.

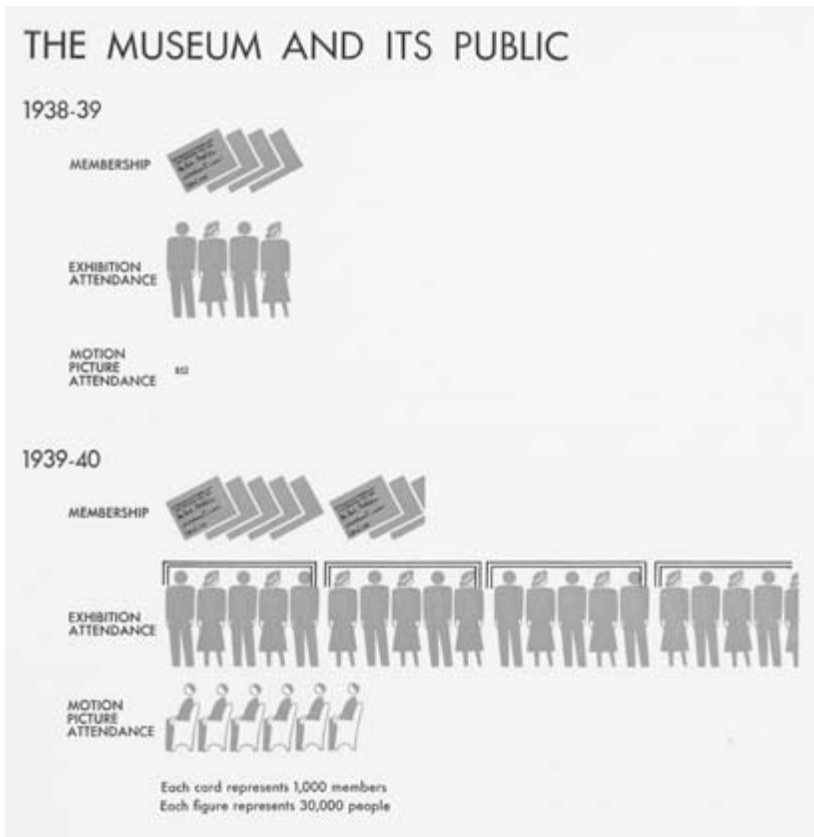


FIGURE 14. “The Museum and Its Public” (Annual Report to the Trustees, June 30, 1939–July 1, 1940). The museum’s internal reports indicate a dramatic increase in annual visitors. The increase in the number of museumgoers extended to MoMA’s film programs as well, which hosted approximately one-third of the institution’s total visitors. Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

available or unavailable, they would be replaced or added. The following is a representative though not comprehensive description of these programs.<sup>7</sup>

The first was a series entitled *A Short Survey of the Film in America, 1895–1932*, which was broken down into smaller segments: “The Development of Narrative, 1894–1911”; “The Rise of the American Film: D. W. Griffith”; “The German Influence”; and “The Talkies.” Films in MoMA’s first program were, commensurate with its title, primarily of American production, with the occasional French-produced or German-directed film thrown in. Included were *The Execution of Mary Queen of Scots* (Edison,



FIGURE 15. "Circulating Exhibitions and Film Library Programs" (Annual Report to the Trustees, June 30, 1939–July 1, 1940). The museum recorded Film Library activities separately from the activities of other departments. Pictured here are the library's circulating film programs alongside what were deemed the regular traveling exhibits. Note that the volume of library programs was roughly equal to the sum total of circulating exhibits from all other museum departments. Distribution for these programs was heaviest in the Northeast and on the West Coast, especially in the Los Angeles area. Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

1895); *Wash Day Troubles* (Lumière, 1896);<sup>8</sup> *A Trip to the Moon* (Georges Méliès, 1902); *The Great Train Robbery* (Edison, 1903); *Faust* (Pathé, 1910); *New York Hat* (D. W. Griffith, 1912); *The Clever Dummy* (Mack Sennett, 1917); *A Fool There Was* (Frank Powell, 1915); *Intolerance* (D. W. Griffith, 1916); *Sunrise* (F. W. Murnau, 1927); *Hands* (1928, Stella Simon); scenes from *The Jazz Singer* (Alan Crosland, 1927); and *Steam Boat Willie* (Walt Disney and Ub Iwerks, 1928). Organized into thematic units, these films represented key developments in American cinema: "Development of the Narrative," "The Rise of the American Film," "The German Influence," and "The Talkies."

The second series, entitled *Some Memorable American Films, 1896–1934*, was arranged more by theme than by formal or chronological development: "The Western Film"; "Comedies"; "The Film and Contemporary

History"; "Mystery and Violence"; and "Screen Personalities." Films included were *The Last Card* (Thomas Ince and William S. Hart, 1915); *The Covered Wagon* (James Cruze, 1923); *The Doctor's Secret* (Georges Méliès, 1900); *The Freshman* (Harold Lloyd, 1925); *Sex Life of a Polyp* (Thomas Chalmers, 1928); *Monsieur Beaucaire* (Sidney Olcott, 1924); and *Underworld* (Josef von Sternberg, 1927). The inclusion of *Underworld* is particularly interesting as it was one of the important protogangster films, presaging an influential cycle of such films in early 1930s Hollywood. *Underworld*, as well as the gangster films that came afterward (*Little Caesar*, *Scarface*, *Public Enemy*), fueled the ascendant attacks on the studios from industry critics. The power of these assaults worked to soften the genre's dark, urban, and violent tones. With this particular act of programming, and with those that followed (MoMA also showed *Little Caesar*), the library provided screen space for metropolitan tales of crime and moral ambiguity. In doing so, it supplied a counterpoint to the Hays Office, as well as to forces such as the Catholic Legion of Decency and the Payne Fund experts. Its status as a private museum with a comparatively small, adult, and, of course, elite audience helped to further buffer it from these regulatory contests.

The remaining programs developed by the library before 1939 took the titles of other national cinemas: Germany, France, and Sweden. Similar to the first programs, the films were organized in rough chronological order and were arranged by theme or director. French works included early Lumière films (1895–96); *Juve vs. Fantomas [Juve contre Fantomas]* (Louis Feuillade, 1913); *The Crazy Ray [Paris Qui Dort]* (René Clair, 1922–23); *The Smiling Madame Beudet* (Germaine Dulac, 1922); *Ballet mécanique* (Fernand Léger, 1924); and *Italian Straw Hat* (René Clair, 1927). *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (Carl-Theodor Dreyer, 1928) was shown, identified as a French-German coproduction. German films included *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1919); *The Last Laugh* (F. W. Murnau, 1924); *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927); *Siegfried* (Lang, 1924); and *The Golem* (Paul Wegener, 1920). Swedish films included *The Outlaw and His Wife* (Victor Seastrom, 1917); *The Atonement of Goesta Berling* (Mauritz Stiller, 1923–23); and *The Wind* (Victor Seastrom, 1928).

Postwar American films were also added, including Ernst Lubitsch's *The Love Parade* (1930); *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (Rex Ingram, 1921); *Greed* (Erich von Stroheim, 1924); *The Navigator* (Buster Keaton, 1924); *Little Caesar* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1930); *The General* (Buster Keaton, 1926); *The Unholy Three* (Tod Browning, 1924); and *Grass* (Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, 1925). As the collection grew, MoMA's

circulating packages became more elaborate and by 1941 included programs organized under multiplying rubrics: D. W. Griffith, Non-fiction Films, The Russian Film, The Films of Douglas Fairbanks, and Forty Years of American Film Comedy.

Program notes accompanied all these films, providing information about production, the context of a film's formal development in relation to other films, the influence of related high and popular art forms, the film's effect on popular trends, language, and fashion, and, occasionally, contemporaneous reactions to the films themselves. Non-American influence on film form garnered occasional mention. Yet, on the whole, program notes recounted a tale of American cinematic destiny. Throughout, these notes demonstrate a soft formalism; innovations in style and mode of expression are discussed alongside sociological observations. There were clearly elements of highbrow inflection, which dampened the more fantastical, bawdy, and comedic side of some popular films. Mack Sennett's slapstick comedy *The Clever Dummy* (1917) transformed from a pie-throwing, madcap antic into "a high form of cinematic art improvised with an instinctive grasp of visual rhythm and of tempo." This same film was also said to demonstrate "a profound, wry knowledge of human nature and a most delicate observation of life."<sup>9</sup>

Popular films were actively embroiled in discussions of form and style, yet they also became valid sources for generating sociopsychological insights. Theda Bara's vamp in *A Fool There Was* (1915) embodied attitudes toward, and appearances of, life indigenous to the time and place of the film's production.<sup>10</sup> *Shootin' Mad* (1911), a "Broncho Billy" Anderson serial, was deemed remarkable both for its innovative narrative methods and for making movies "universally beloved."<sup>11</sup> The tremendous popularity of certain films was often invoked as a virtue unto itself rather than a vice. Clearly, film's formal history and the attempt to foster a critical public were intimately related to efforts to also generate consideration of film's sociohistorical significance. These goals and the narratives used to further them were intertwined throughout the Film Library's notes.

Select film titles were also grouped into themed units such as "The Film and Contemporary History" and "Mystery and Violence."<sup>12</sup> The former included an episode from the March of Time series, deemed important because it represented a "new kind of pictorial journalism," carrying forward the actuality and newsreel traditions of cinema as reportage.<sup>13</sup> Resonant with discourses about new kinds of visual knowledge—the idea of film as an uncanny document—was Barry's note on *Cavalcade*, a historical drama from 1933:

Through [the film], we can study at very nearly first-hand the revealing gestures and expressions of eminent men now dead, of crowds at public gatherings that took place thirty or forty years ago. In compilations of old newsreels, such as the English *Through Three Reigns*, it has been possible for us to look backwards, as no previous generations could, on the living and animated face of yesterday. That Queen Victoria was indeed “a very little lady” we know to be the fact. There is a shot of her riding through Dublin around 1900 which proves it. *Cavalcade* is a newsreel compilation in dramatic form.<sup>14</sup>

The film was also an uncanny historical document construed as having an aesthetic-informational value uniquely its own. Moreover, dramatizations of important events were equally valuable, ostensibly offering spectators through the ages an unprecedented window onto the past. Many of these film notes were written by Barry and reflect both the fascination with visual information evident in her early film criticism and the more general fascination with historico-visual information that we have seen manifested in discourses related to archives and libraries that antedated the Film Library.<sup>15</sup> This fascination with visual information was also, at times, transferred onto fictional narrative films. Indeed, concerns formal and functional, informational and spectacular, were woven throughout these notes.

#### EXPANDED NARRATIVES

Each film series was announced in museum press releases, accompanied by brief commentary or sometimes excerpts from the official program notes. In accordance with MoMA's active integration of the press into its operations, invitations were issued for special press screenings, held before those open to the museum's members, allowing that film critics might compose meaningful commentary in conjunction with, or actually before, the official museum screening. The first such invitation read: “The six early movies which comprise the program will be accompanied by music appropriate to the day in which each was produced. So far as is known, this will be the first time that a film series, selected and assembled by an educational institution, will be shown in chronological sequence for the purpose of studying the motion picture as an art. Program notes will explain the significance of these films.”<sup>16</sup> Local film critics and other press members were invited to see the same programs that were to be shown to “leaders of the film industry,” as well as to select museum members, linking the critic-expert to an exclusive circle of specialized viewers. Film was similarly institutionally articulated within a prestigious cultural and educational site.



Ordered chronologically and also accompanied by contemporaneous music, particular films were imbued with the general logic of other museum objects—dated and ordered and otherwise inflected with their unique, identifiable historicity.

Early press releases functioned as announcements characterized by equal measures of noble purpose and certain success. They also served as basic informational conduits about film, as well as the library's activities, generating interest among newspaper readers in both the ideas embodied by the Film Library and its basic operational procedures.<sup>17</sup> One element of these efforts was the persistent claim that the library's programs were a great success, widely seen and discussed. Only two months after the official start of its circulating programs, the library announced that MoMA's two American programs had been shown by fifty-two institutions in twenty-one states and had been seen by eighty thousand people. During April and May, the press release continued, the programs were exhibited on an average of seventeen times a week.<sup>18</sup> Museum announcements to the press declared plans to expand distribution nationally from coast to coast.<sup>19</sup> Many early press releases also supplied elementary information about the programs: how to rent them and what accompanied them (program notes, musical scores). Like its museum home, the library fashioned itself early on as a national cultural force—addressing, and also inviting participation from, a dispersed public.

Lending credibility to the library's programs through association not only with industry insiders but also with the emergent class of film critics also helped to bolster its designs on a national presence. The library effectively constructed itself as a site of coordination for an emergent national sensibility about sophisticated cinema. Serious study, established reputations, and general buzz were constant elements of library releases, which were picked up by newspaper syndicates and major urban dailies. The Film Library eagerly sought to present its project as something that was happening daily throughout the country. As evidenced by this press release from 1936:

Although the Film Library has had only a year to become established, organized and active, response to its services has grown in almost geometric ratio. That the programs encourage a serious interest in the motion picture is indicated by the number of students and professors, many resident in distant cities, who come to the library to consult its collection of books, manuscripts, and data on the film, and by the even greater number of requests by mail and telephone for reading lists and other information. Hundreds of letters have been received from institu-

tions and individuals here and abroad desirous of exhibiting the programs next year. Nearly fifteen hundred articles and comments on the work of the Film Library have been published in the daily press and in magazines.<sup>20</sup>

Universities, museums, and professors were frequently and proudly invoked. The Film Library's acquisitions were also regularly announced with similar pomp, as were its relations with Hollywood personalities. Its hunt for noteworthy films was also made into news, with regular announcements of film discoveries made everywhere from hatboxes to cosmopolitan European centers. The press soaked it up.

On rare occasions, the library's goal was affiliated with the common idea that film—like all the arts—speaks a universal and unifying language. The generosity of European countries with film donations was used as a vindication of the idea that film could indeed bring people together and dissolve political conflict:

The arts have always spoken a universal language. They cross national boundary lines without bloodshed, and give alien races common grounds of appreciation. The motion picture is the youngest of the arts but it speaks to the greatest number of people everywhere. In California, Mickey Mouse sets off a laugh that is heard round the world. Jannings of Germany, Laughton of England are eagerly welcomed on the screens of all nations. The motion picture is the greatest common denominator of humanity.<sup>21</sup>

Early on the Film Library presented itself as a national site of international harmony and reconciliation, gathering forgotten wonders from around the globe and creating a sudden sense of civilized order from an otherwise chaotic and, of course, utterly imbalanced system.

It is important to note that while universalist rhetoric appears occasionally throughout the library's mediated presence, American-nationalist rhetoric was far more prevalent. Further, while its attempt to insert its unusual programs into the national eye was the primary mode in which the library found its largest public, MoMA also distributed much more conventional museum fare, including filmed tours and instructional films of primarily European architectural spaces, theaters, and art collections. It also prepared anthologies on dance styles and folk art, as well as collecting and circulating films on natural science, motion experiments, X rays, physics, animal husbandry, and industrial films. By 1944 the library's catalogue contained a section of films designated as suitable for use by teachers as illustrations of accent and diction. MoMA rented films on a broad range of topics, classified by headings such as "Conservation and Economic Plan-

ning," "Education," "Public Health," "Communications," "Industry and Craft," and "Travel and Anthropology." During the war years, it fulfilled its patriotic duty as a distributor of films from the Office of War Information, including the *Why We Fight* series.<sup>22</sup> All these films were categorized not as specifically cinematic experiments but as films to help students learn about their subject.

In other words, the Film Library inherited the national educational goals of the museum. Film thus served two distinct but interrelated purposes. First, films (American and non-American) were circulated throughout the country to schools, museums, and universities, billed as unique objects of serious study and historical significance. Second, fueled by Progressivist approaches to education, film was also part of the expanding arts and visual education movement of the time—a movement in which the museum sought to fully implicate itself. Pundits heralded film as the new revolution in educating a nation. Within the museum, this meant using films to educate not only about film and the other arts but also about geography, history, anthropology, civics, and so on. In other words, films found their way into secondary schools and universities, where they were studied as windows onto other cultures, places, and times. Connecting both of these impulses was the reconceptualization of museological space itself. The very mobility of film increased the possibilities of museological exhibition. Films were being viewed across the nation, presented as unique aesthetic objects, historical indexes, illustrations for lectures, automated teachers, and object lessons.

Discussions about museological and pedagogical innovations continued throughout this period. Within them, film was often given an important place as a key strategy for extending museum influence in all matters: aesthetic, architectural, educational, and those related to industrial design, membership expansion, and so on.<sup>23</sup> Thus MoMA's Film Library also played a role in furthering the educational use of films in classrooms, museums, civic clubs, and appreciation societies. It also underpins the history of the American museum as a self-conceived educator and its long-standing use of audiovisual technologies to enhance this role.<sup>24</sup> This impulse to endow films with a broad sense of educational utility also crossed over into films more conventionally understood as unique and important cinematic documents. The library's catalogue for 1944–45 reflects concretely the ongoing usage patterns and the library's attempt to respond to these patterns. The catalogue contains the standard repertoire: *French Film Pioneers*, *A Short History of Animation*, *History of the American Film*, and *Experimental and Avant-Garde Films*. Yet films were also clearly organized around the diver-

sified demands of the visual education movement, which yielded some classifications that are unusual by contemporary standards. For instance, MoMA's film distribution catalogue from 1944–45 reframed the significance of many well-known experimental films, listing the city films of Alberto Cavalcanti, Walter Ruttmann, and Jay Leyda under the subcategory "Housing and Community Planning," which itself was listed under the larger "Social Sciences" section. *The Camera Goes Along*, a German-produced documentary from 1936 about the making of newsreels under Hitler, was classified under "The Arts" as well as under "Foreign Language" films. Cleverly, Buñuel's quietly ironic *Land without Bread* (1932) was listed under "Travel and Anthropology," sitting alongside Basil Wright's empire-friendly *Song of Ceylon* (1934) about the production of tea.<sup>25</sup> Film categories that we take for granted today were being negotiated and rethought with some regularity during this period. Accelerating the seemingly odd classification of particular films were the more general challenges facing a marginalized museum department seeking to establish its own certainty and legitimacy within a much larger and determining structure. This includes the museum's own expansionist mandates, as well as an ascendant widespread impulse to make moving images educational.

#### THE COSTS OF PROGRAMMABLE HISTORY

As its film offerings expanded and its programming diversified, there remained numerous impediments to the Film Library's success. The agreement that the library had struck with the industry governing exhibition proved to have lasting and sizable impact. This contract stipulated that in order to use Hollywood films, all user groups must qualify as educational and nonprofit—no admission could be charged. The effects of this policy were twofold. On the one hand, it was restrictive. It meant that anyone who wanted to see one of the library's films either had to become a museum member and live in or near New York or had to join or perhaps form a study group somewhere else. Money would be required to pay for film rentals. On the other hand, it served as a catalyst for producing a particular ideal of cinematic engagement, providing a formative influence on the fledgling American film society movement. The founding of such groups was encouraged in Film Library catalogues and brochures throughout the period.<sup>26</sup> Forming a film society made potential renters readily identifiable under the institution's remit. Closely linked to the emergence of a film society movement was the marked increase of interest in university-level film study through-

out the 1920s and 1930s. Film societies commonly—though not exclusively—formed under the aegis of established organs of higher education and became crucial to MoMA's success, actively renting films and also tacitly affirming the museum's endeavor. In turn, the Film Library programs and film notes fundamentally changed the material conditions under which film study evolved in the United States. MoMA forged the conditions in which something like a film society movement was possible.

MoMA's film programs and program notes allowed the still-unusual idea that films could be studied to shift from local, specific, and sometimes eclectic projects to a nationally organized, highly coordinated system that could be run with regularity and reliability. Film Library programs offered the advantage of expert curation, steady film supply, and authoritative cultural sanction; they were based on a standardized set of films and also on regulated methods for analysis around which curriculum could be established and maintained. The didactic intertitles, inserted by library staff within all its circulating films, served as automated film lectures, inexpensively distributed and reproduced with each film projection (figures 16–18). Screenings of MoMA programs were held at Dartmouth, Stanford, Bryn Mawr, Mount Holyoke, Smith, William and Mary, Vassar, and the New School for Social Research. Films were hired by the Universities of Chicago, Pittsburgh, Washington, Minnesota, Missouri, and California–Berkeley. New York, Princeton, Brown, Cornell, Colgate, and Indiana universities filled out the list.<sup>27</sup> It should be noted that MoMA's films were used in a surprising range of university departments, including visual education, drama, public speaking, art and archaeology, fine arts, economics, and sociology. Library programs were also frequently shown in language departments. Film societies proliferated concurrently at many of these same institutions, fed almost exclusively by MoMA's programs.<sup>28</sup> Library staff also directly implicated themselves and their programs in the burgeoning discourses of film study and appreciation. Barry, for instance, gave lectures in courses offered at three universities in the New York area: the New School for Social Research, New York University, and Columbia University.<sup>29</sup> Film Library programs were announced regularly in national publications such as the *National Board of Review Magazine*, a primary organ for promulgating ideas about better films and film appreciation. MoMA's press releases, picked up by national newspaper syndicates, also persistently reiterated the importance of studying, thinking, and talking about the films it showed.

The use of MoMA's programs also spread to appreciation clubs, amateur and art associations, educational groups and museums throughout the



FIGURE 16. "Museum of Modern Art Film Library" (intertitle), ca. 1937. Courtesy of the Department of Film and Media, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

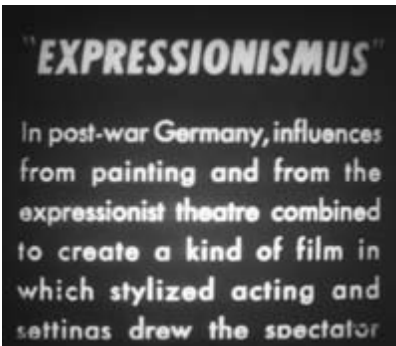


FIGURE 17. "Expressionismus" (intertitle), ca. 1937. Courtesy of the Department of Film and Media, Museum of Modern Art, New York.



FIGURE 18. "Warning Shadows" (intertitle), ca. 1937. Courtesy of the Department of Film and Media, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

United States and Canada. The remarkable coordination of this new audience was achieved despite the seeming constraints of MoMA's agreement with the industry. Nonetheless, the inability to charge admission to screenings did indeed prove a hindrance. This fact alone put even the most industrious film societies in rather awkward and sometimes ironic positions. For instance, the Dartmouth Film Society began to book commercial films and charge admission to earn money to pay for the MoMA Film Library's "non-commercial" and "educational" films.<sup>30</sup>

Despite what may seem a relative success for the new exhibitor, the library and the Rockefeller Foundation remained unsatisfied with the comparatively small percentage of the filmgoing audience they had attracted. Clearly, one of the problems facing the library in its quest to generate a studious audience for cinema was material. Potential audiences and rental groups lacked some of the most basic requirements for participating in the study circuit. Many simply did not have access to a film projector. Additionally, those interested in renting or buying necessary equipment possessed widely varying kinds of spaces, with different seating arrangements and unreliable power supplies.<sup>31</sup> Voltages, frequencies, and amperages varied. Early on, the Film Library anticipated that such factors would present a problem. As such, it discussed supplying projectors along with its films, and even generated a scheme to act as a broker for the purchase of adequate projection systems. Yet these plans did not come to fruition, and well into 1940 technical problems and a general shortage of funds continued to hinder groups interested in the library's programs.

The vast majority of Film Library programs circulated in 16mm format. Yet, despite the explosion of the 16mm gauge nationally and internationally, penetration of the format was by no means complete. Further, the cost of 16mm projectors was still relatively high during this period, taxing small groups and institutions with meager and even modest audiovisual budgets. In 1935, for instance, AMPRO sold a silent 16mm projector for \$135 (the equivalent of approximately \$1,811 in 2003); Victor sold its 16mm sound projector for as much as \$395 (\$5,299 in 2003). Do-it-yourself projection technology developed rapidly, with various silent and sound projectors introduced throughout the period. Constantly improving machines adapted to continually discovered needs; new units appeared regularly. Such contraptions featured adaptable lenses and more powerful bulbs to accommodate viewing spaces of varying dimensions. To manage these complexities, Barry suggested early on that the library might circulate its own projector and screen with the programs, creating a self-contained theater impervious to the constant changes and high costs. She estimated that this would cost the library \$575 (\$7,714 in 2003)—a sizable portion of its available budget.<sup>32</sup>

The expense of renting the programs themselves was also a problem. Initially, the library intended to work by annual subscription, charging a membership fee of \$250 (\$3,191 in 2003) per year for use of its services. Judging this amount to be utterly prohibitive, it began to charge per program: \$25 (\$319 in 2003) for a two-hour film program in either 35mm or 16mm gauge if a group booked the whole series or else \$40 (\$510 in 2003)

for an individual program. After criticism from the Rockefeller Foundation, as well as reports from the field that its programs were unaffordable, the library lowered its prices, differentiating rental rates by film gauge and making the structure of available programs more flexible.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, total revenue for film rentals dropped during the following year in approximately the same ratio as the price reduction, possibly indicating that the reduction was either inadequate or irrelevant.<sup>34</sup> Further, it became increasingly evident that film rentals, once held to be the primary method by which the library might wean itself from outside support, could never provide a self-sustaining source of income. Barry estimated that the library was only able to earn somewhere between 5 and 10 percent of its operating costs back through income generated by film rentals.<sup>35</sup>

In addition to the material challenges to its aims, the library encountered other tests. As its programs diversified to include explicitly non-American or, as they were termed, "foreign" films, controversies and protests became common. Punctuated by the populism of the 1930s, MoMA was seen by some as an exclusive salon where the wealthy were served caviar with decadent, unintelligible art as backdrop. As the decade wore on, the conflicts between American and European art and their respective relationships to American values became unavoidable. With the museum's exhibition policies accused of being centered in a largely European art movement, American artists and institutions dedicated to more traditional and "properly" American art attacked MoMA for its Eurocentric, or even anti-American, practices. While the bulk of these attacks focused on the museum's more prominent painting and sculptural holdings, film was not entirely exempt. The Film Library's exhibitions—especially of German and Soviet films—invited suspicion inside and outside of the museum.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, while the library sought to collect and preserve many kinds of films, the public nature of its exhibition programs did not allow for the same catholicity. In short, even in the library's earliest planning stages, there was more caution about showing than saving films, particularly those deemed to be controversial. Internal and external rebuke was feared. Partly to protect its acquisition practices, the Film Library programmed films judiciously, hoping to preempt unwanted criticism that might jeopardize its already tenuous position with trustees and industry members alike. A memo written by John Abbott to board member Abby Rockefeller documents these concerns:

The international character of the programs will, I think, prevent any complaint about the inclusion of certain films with a marked national or political flavor—such as some Russian or German ones—which if



shown singly might produce comment. . . . As for the very few films which alone among all those of any real interest could be considered objectionable—such as the Buñuel-Dali *L'Âge d'Or*<sup>37</sup>—while we might perhaps wish ultimately to have a copy of them stored in our library, we should very definitely be opposed to any idea of circulating them as part of our programs.<sup>38</sup>

The Film Library planned to camouflage films of particular nations under the more generic guise of “internationalism” or under broad titles such as *The Motion Picture* (as it did for its early Wadsworth screening), assuaging concerned trustees, as well as its public, in the process. It seems as if a similar strategy may have been used in 1939 as part of the first program run at the museum’s new building on West Fifty-third Street. The program, called *A Cycle of Seventy Films*, included primarily American but also French, German, and Swedish films gathered from the beginning of public projection to 1935. Strangely absent were the important Soviet films, an omission that drew notice from the local labor press.<sup>39</sup> While there may have been hesitation to associate Soviet films with American films, there was little such reluctance to do so with German films made by now familiar directors such as F. W. Murnau (*The Last Laugh*, 1924) and G. W. Pabst (*The Love of Jeanne Ney*, 1927). Of course, all German films shown in this particular exhibition were made before the nationalization of film production in 1933. It also is crucial to note that such films as *Ten Days That Shook the World* (Sergei Eisenstein and G. Y. Alexandrov, 1927), *Kino Pravda* (Dziga Vertov, 1922), *Battleship Potemkin* (Eisenstein, 1925), *Mother* (Vsevolod Pudovkin, 1926), *Arsenal* (Alexander Dovzhenko, 1928), and *Triumph of the Will* (Leni Riefenstahl, 1934) were available for rental concurrently in MoMA’s circulating collection, and available only months later at the museum itself as part of a series entitled *Ten Programs: French, German and Russian Films*, which ran from January to March 1940.<sup>40</sup>

#### OLD FILMS, NEW PUBLICS

As a museum, MoMA enacted a considerable public relations and press management campaign well before 1935, the year the library was founded.<sup>41</sup> Following suit, the Film Library immediately initiated its own active campaign. By mid-1937 the Film Library staff had delivered more than twenty-seven film lectures and published more than twenty articles on the library’s activities in trade, theater, museum, library, and film literature.<sup>42</sup> Speeches, radio shows, celebrity endorsements, and regular press

announcements helped the Film Library aggressively insert itself into the public eye. By December 1937 the staff had traced and collected 2,029 press clippings related to their activities, generated in part by at least forty-one press releases.<sup>43</sup>

The available press releases suggest a varied approach to presenting the library's circulating programs. At times, the staff constructed film history largely as a reflection of American cultural heritage and world influence that deserved serious and disciplined attention. At other times, they called attention to the unavailability of films that had long passed from popular screens and the consequent impossibility of both retrieving forgotten memories and accessing vital records of human expression. Official announcements to the media supplied brief lessons in American film history, which journalists used as material to wax nostalgic about Mary Pickford, to consider changing sexual mores, and to observe shifts in acting conventions.<sup>44</sup> Such articles appeared in some usual and some notably unusual places, including specialized journals, the published outlets for uplift groups, and tourist literature, for example, the monthly magazine for the Girl Scouts, *American Girl*; the journal for the Special Libraries Association, *Special Libraries*; the "Weekly Movie Guide" published regularly in *Parents' Magazine*; the women's magazine *Delineator*; the radical theater journal *New Theatre*; the *Ambassador* (the magazine for the prestigious hotel); the *New York Herald Tribune*; and the *Christian Science Monitor*.<sup>45</sup>

MoMA's Film Library continued organizing special press screenings and proudly announced new acquisitions. Its efforts signaled the ultimate in official public acceptance when it exhibited early American films at the White House to President Franklin Roosevelt and Eleanor Roosevelt in 1937.<sup>46</sup> A year later, a special Academy Award was granted for its contribution to film preservation and for making films available to the public for the study of the medium's history and aesthetic development. In 1938, Barry and Abbott began lobbying to have a movie made that advocated the importance of saving films. Their strategy was to highlight great moments from American film history that had long gone unseen. This film, it was hoped, would be circulated by all distributors for the benefit of the museum. In 1939, these efforts resulted in an estimated audience of twenty to twenty-six million when *The March of Time* produced a special issue devoted to American film history entitled *The Movies March On*.<sup>47</sup> The episode depicts the inevitable progress of American film, construing the Film Library's efforts to acquire and preserve the record of an impending American dynasty as equally heroic. The film clips included in this episode were wholly selected from the Film Library's first circulating exhibitions,

also dedicated to American film history.<sup>48</sup> Interestingly, these excerpts were changed for the French version of the same film, for which library staff suggested and provided clips of works by the Lumière brothers, Georges Méliès, Max Linder, and Carl Theodor Dreyer, indicating an awareness of the competing nationalist approaches to the writing of film history itself. In this instance, were the movies quintessentially French or American? Nonetheless, positioning itself as indispensable to the American film industry and as performing a valuable service for the nation, the Film Library—wittingly or not—became an authoritative spokesperson for Hollywood's Americanist disposition, documenting the ascendance of its films with utter disregard for international influence or critical cultural intervention. At this cost the Film Library found its first truly and properly national film audience.

It is important to differentiate between what might constitute MoMA's film audience (those who watched films it programmed and rented) and what might be called MoMA's public, a much broader group that included people who may not have seen its films but otherwise benefited from or interacted with the institution. In other words, MoMA's public was an expansive one. It included those who saw its films but also those who were aware of the films from newspaper and radio coverage. The public of which MoMA was both instigator and object included a range of media and an equally diffuse arrangement of sensibilities about cinema. Its programs as well as talk about them were made sense of by a dispersed assortment of individuals and institutions, not only film critics and scholars interested in writing about and thinking through movies but also those very much shaped by contemporaneous and popular ideas about moviegoing.

In the 1930s, three significant trends in popular viewing involved the screening of old films. One was the shift of film exhibition to the double-feature format. Films of recent years, still in circulation, would occasionally be shown on the second half of a double bill, providing inexpensive filler. Second, a select group of films was chosen for rerelease as primary features, such as *The Informer* (John Ford, 1935), *Dangerous* (Alfred Green, 1935), and *A Connecticut Yankee* (David Butler, 1931). These works were reissued because of their widespread appeal upon initial release. They were exceptions to the rule, however, and the vast number of American features, notably the great silent features, would not be seen again by general audiences. The third trend was the assembly and exhibition of found-footage compilations such as the Screen Souvenirs series, exhibited as part of an evening's theatrical program. These were essentially miniature cinema anthologies of silent-film clips, accompanied by a voice-over and sound ef-

fects, live or recorded, casting the conventions of silent cinema in comic relief. The gestures were construed as exaggerated; the gimmicks were dated and silly; the special effects were cheap and contrived. Old films became objects of derision, inducing laughter and further ensuring that current films would be seen as superior to films of the past. There was also a curiosity value in these exercises as current-day celebrities could be viewed playing extras and wearing dated costumes, old-fashioned hairstyles, and cheap disguises. The sudden bathos of Hollywood's elite induced the recognition of fallen fame and forgotten youth. The humor should also be understood, in part, as a marker of the enormous changes the cinema had undergone in the past thirty years. From "flickers" to grand Hollywood spectacles, technological and stylistic economies moved quickly, serving to date films in such a way as to make them seem of a dramatically different time and species, and therefore laughable.

Within this context the Film Library announced its plans to show old movies under the aegis of a modern art museum. There were varied responses to the plan, as journalists expressed skepticism about the exercise of simply taking films seriously. The *New York Telegraph* described the library's intentions to facilitate film study, commenting glibly, "Said research work, of course, taking the form of critical examination of Miss Jean Harlow, Miss Marlene Dietrich's legs and other such curious manifestations of motion picture life."<sup>49</sup> At the thought of Pickford, Keaton, and Chaplin sitting beside Gauguin, van Gogh, and Picasso, Emily Grenauer of the *World-Telegram* wrote succinctly, "The academic die-hards are cackling."<sup>50</sup> There was also a populist defense of the cinema; concern about associating film with "art" appeared consistently. Some feared that MoMA's project would taint the pleasure of the cinema, resulting in "higher standards" and "intellectual snobbishness," robbing "the rising generation of its gunmen and sex dramas."<sup>51</sup> In short, there were skeptics from both inside and outside of established cultural circles, from above and below the great divide. Others simply ventriloquized museum press releases, announcing that the establishment of the Film Library itself confirmed that film is indeed an art.

It is important to recognize in these responses a qualitative difference between the bulk of the popular newspaper press and the emergent class of film critics in middlebrow and little magazines. These critics had slowly aligned themselves against standard theatrical fare, favoring examples of European, primarily German but also Soviet cinema, which appeared intermittently in America throughout the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>52</sup> Particular films such as Ernst Lubitsch's *Passion* (1921), F. W. Murnau's *Last Laugh* (1924),

Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1926), and, importantly, Robert Wiene's *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919) appeared regularly on screens throughout the twenties and effected a form of writing that celebrated the foreign at the expense of the domestic. Such films provided notably different, stimulating, innovative, and occasionally exotic examples of cinematic potential; each was in some way informed by the aesthetic ferment of European modernism.<sup>53</sup> Moved by these films, select writers throughout the 1930s contended that Hollywood was transforming American film from spontaneous, exhilarating, and rhythmic to contrived, trivial, and derivative. These critics reacted, then, against the industry's oligopolistic consolidation and also against the same industry's acquiescence to censorious reform groups that plagued it throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Many critics grew dissatisfied with polite, bourgeois narratives and nostalgic for the early days of cinematic discovery, arguing that American films might be rejuvenated by capturing elements of their former youth. Others began to object to Hollywood's aversion to social and political commentary, linking its films directly to more widespread ideological projects. This exercise began to manifest itself in an emerging divide characteristic of film writing of the period—a divide between those who believed commercial film could embody distinct and accomplished aesthetic principles and those who condemned commercial film as the inevitably flawed product of a corrupt system.<sup>54</sup> Responses to the Film Library spanned the divide being created by this emergent generation of film critics, with some embracing and others outright laughing at their project.

Upon release of the first circulating exhibitions in January 1936, there was an enormous response in the popular press that cannot be attributed solely to the Film Library's attempts at press management. Consequences unintended and unpredictable made themselves evident. More than as a demonstration of film's formal development or sociological significance, the circulating programs were greeted as most remarkable for their "oldness." Films were described as being "primitive," "archaic," and "rare" and as "lost treasures," "relics," "antiques," and "ancient thrillers." Films were "unearthed," "resurrected," "reborn," and "embalmed."<sup>55</sup> The film "veil" had been lifted. The Film Library became an "asylum for film" and a "sanctuary against time."<sup>56</sup> Only forty years after the first projected films, the cinema had acquired the sense of wonder and discovery usually reserved for objects of lost civilizations and faraway cultures. At the same time, these objects maintained an uncanny familiarity. They were objects of another time and place that bore remarkable resemblance and some ill-formed relationship to the visual culture of the present. Furthermore,

these films were identified as an integral part of the American heritage, as emblems of a past long gone, and as the utter vindication of America's contribution to the world—a view forwarded, though not fully embraced, by the Film Library staff themselves.

Despite MoMA's attempt to foster more thoughtful attitudes toward film history through its program notes and targeting of institutions of higher learning, initial press reports suggest that its first circulating exhibitions were greeted largely as historical oddities, with dated fashions, histrionic gestures, and archaic conventions. Much like the old films shown for comic relief before and between features, what were once tragic moments turned to hilarity, what were once gestures of horror became gestures of clowns. Frank Nugent titled his review article for the *New York Times* "A Comedy of Eras." Katherine Hill, writing for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, titled hers "Ancient Thrillers of the Cinema Museum Affording Cheerful Entertainment."<sup>57</sup> *Faust* (Pathé, 1910) became burlesque. Sarah Bernhardt's death scene in *Queen Elizabeth* (Adolph Zukor, 1912) sent audiences into "gales of laughter."

Yet there was something different about this laughter than that which had come before. Now audiences were laughing at films that were *historical*. While journalists had difficulty articulating how this laughter was different, it clearly was. Old films, now co-articulated with the historical, became part of a simultaneously laughable and laudable event. After calling these old films very naive, quaint, and funny, Leo Mishkin noted apologetically: "But they are historic. And that they are historic is the most important matter in connection with them. It shows that the screen is finally coming into its heritage, that it is at last becoming recognized as a major art and that there will come a time in the not too distant future, when early motion pictures will be ranked with early novels and early plays in the development of civilization."<sup>58</sup> Virginia Boren, of the *Seattle Daily Times*, wrote: "We laughed at the train robbery picture when men squirmed in wild gestures as they died in a shooting fray, we thought the love scenes between Essex and the Countess more comedy than tragedy, we felt patronizing pity for those pioneers in entertainment who were momentarily satisfied with a screen that quivered. But . . . we were fascinated every moment."<sup>59</sup> Vague references were made to the future civic function of film's oddities and to the basic fascination of seeing these images again. They had changed; they seemed raw, innocent, even pathetic. Yet they were often treated as a vindication of cinema's present and as hope for its future.

More commentary followed. As the traveling programs circulated, journalists took the opportunity to write small histories of the American film,

inspired primarily by the Film Library's program notes and press releases. As time passed, more and more commentary was directed away from the novelty factor and toward an expectation that old films ought to be more widely available—as much for their entertainment value as for their informational or heritage value. Whereas individual films might have seemed silly, they took on new relevance when arranged and codified as elements in a historical narrative.

Serious film writers used these programs as points of comparison with current commercial cinema. Some saw the older works as proof that Hollywood had brought unmitigated progress to the popular film. Others considered these films evidence of all that had been lost in the medium's increasing industrialization and adoption of sound technologies. Others considered such films evidence that American films reigned supreme and were entitled to the international dominance they enjoyed. For the emerging critical community, the Film Library's programs became a kind of cinematic Rorschach test, as is readily evident by surveying the comments of three established critics of the period. Gilbert Seldes, Herman Weinberg, and Robert Stebbins each in his own way acknowledged the important contribution the Film Library was making to film culture. Though Seldes himself opposed the idea of elite or specialized audiences for cinema, he was indeed friendly to the idea of repertory. He noted that in exhibiting otherwise unavailable old films, "the museum's library will at least give people the idea that the movies are not something seen today, to be forgotten over-night, but as steadily interesting as a good novel."<sup>60</sup> Herman Weinberg acknowledged the value of the synchronic comparison the Film Library's screenings allowed, leading him to criticize recent changes in film production:

Aside from their obvious interest as curiosities, the films shown had a deeper and more significant interest; they gave mute but eloquent proof that the tendency of film today is to stray farther and farther away from its essential domain. The province of the cinema, as originally conceived, and in which it was developed to its most intense form, was that of fantasy and flights of the imagination . . . it is the film of today which is in an alien land, and not the film of yesterday which stems from an alien source. And memory is a short and deceptive thing.<sup>61</sup>

Robert Stebbins, writing for the leftist *New Theatre*, also used the library screenings as an opportunity to consider what film had become with Hollywood's ascendance: "The Museum of Modern Art Film Library deserves the gratitude of film devotees for this unexpected opportunity to take stock of the present state of film by comparison with past achievements. Perhaps

if a wide enough public will be admitted to the showings, American audiences will be shocked from their complacent acceptance of Hollywood's 1936 claim to movie pre-eminence."<sup>62</sup> While Seldes celebrated a generalized respect for films, Weinberg focused on what had been lost of film's true aesthetic spirit. Stebbins used these films as an overt attack on Hollywood itself, accompanied by a polite but pointed reference to the limited if not exclusive conditions in which such films were being shown in the first place.

Old films would soon be an accepted and obvious aspect of specialized film culture. Popular press coverage of this novel idea provided the broader landscape for the growing number of film courses, clubs, and societies fed by library programs. Yet the demand for such films was not always in the name of criticism or education. In fact, old films became quite a fashion, presented at chic cocktail parties and in upscale department stores. Headlines declared: "Public's Craze for 'Meller-Drammer' of Early Movie Era Spreading Rapidly," "Freak Demand for Silents," and "Old-Time Movies Are the Newest Film Fashion."<sup>63</sup> Journalists reported that silent films had become a popular stunt for private parties from coast to coast. Their regular screening was held in eastern resort towns such as Atlantic City and in at least one upscale theater in New York City.<sup>64</sup> Inge Benson, journalist for the *New York Herald Tribune* noted that by 1940 the "modern craze for revivals" had yielded at least three midtown Manhattan theaters given over to exhibiting silents. Another of these sites is described by Benson as a beer hall in which patrons can see an "old-time screen dish served up with a foaming glass of beer." Benson makes clear that the crowds for these films were lively, prone to making up their own dialogue and otherwise competing for stage time with the honky-tonk pianist who added "amusingly inappropriate sound effects."<sup>65</sup> Another noteworthy example of mixing nostalgia and irreverence was a film series called Flicker Frolics, old films marketed as "movie antiques." Flicker Frolics debuted in department stores in 1936, graduated to the film circuits that supported clubs, churches, schools, and other organizations and eventually became popular enough for theatrical exhibition. Culled largely from the shelves of a stock-shot library rich in rapidly aging prewar footage, these films were used as nostalgic journeys through the past, replete with old slides that encouraged cheering, hissing, and sing-alongs. Sound effects were sometimes added for comic relief.<sup>66</sup> In most of these references to old-film fashions, the Film Library was identified as having influenced if not initiated the trend.

While there was an ample supply of inexpensive films filled with anonymous actors to satisfy the Flicker Frolics and the Screen Souvenirs



series, many feature films requested by exhibitors and party hosts alike were simply unavailable. Some journalists questioned the studios' refusal to release silent films such as *The Covered Wagon* (James Cruze, 1923), *Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Wallace Worsley, 1923), and *Phantom of the Opera* (Rupert Julian, 1925) for limited theatrical runs and special events. Commentators reasoned that film exchanges were geared to handle "fresh film" and had no place for old films, that studios were unwilling to relinquish tight control of their vaults, and that unavailability of "fit prints" made rereleasing them unprofitable given the cost of striking a new print.<sup>67</sup> From saloon sing-alongs to cocktail diversions, MoMA's film programs wove together a variegated field of film practice. From desultory and debauched to the erudite and effete, old films crystallized a lasting form of cinema's historicity, when old and new would coexist. Aging celluloid became part of the cinematic present, implicated in class-conscious politics both reverent and irreverent, salutary and sanctifying. Nostalgia also entered the mix. The diversity of functions served by library programs was also a deliberate part of the library's publicity work:

Valentino and Sarah Bernhardt move once more across motion picture screens in this country. So do Mabel Normand and Pearl White, Sessue Hayakawa and Wallace Reid, Theda Bara and the little Gish girls. To some, these names are only a legend. There are people who thrill to see these former idols again, while others smile at the outmoded clothes they wear or the now unfamiliar style of their acting. Some faithful souls even weep secretly in the darkness because film fame is so fleeting. Yet it is neither for laughter nor for tears that the old favorites of the screen have returned. Their films cannot be seen in the cinema theaters. The showing of these older films is part of a movement originated by the Museum of Modern Art in New York to create an interest in the history and development of the film, since, among all the arts, that of the film is not only the newest but the most characteristic of our era.<sup>68</sup>

## ROWDY SOPHISTICATES

As the Film Library expanded, the museum also grew around it. During its first ten years, the museum's spiraling curatorial activities accompanied a corresponding growth of the institution itself. Within only a decade, architecture, film, and photography had been granted departments of their own. In 1939, a new permanent home for the museum was constructed at its current site, 11 West Fifty-third Street. An architectural spectacle unto itself, it was unveiled in conjunction with the New York World's Fair of 1939: *The World of Tomorrow*. The building catalyzed a tremendous rise in

annual visitors, increasing from 119,803 to 585,303.<sup>69</sup> The popularity of the museum was served well by its conscious efforts to pair concepts of excellence and aesthetic discrimination with practices of accessibility and civic utility. Its active publicity department did not hurt either. The new museum was presented by the country's business elite and government leaders—including Roosevelt himself—to a national audience, brokered by the ascendant empire of radio and even the fledgling tool of television.

With the groundbreaking of the museum's flagship site, the Film Library was given office space in a signature building of international renown. It was further granted a new air-conditioned auditorium that seated close to five hundred people (figure 19). Its status had changed considerably. With this new theater it was able to show its films in a regular fashion alongside other museum exhibits. Admission to screenings could be gained by paying admission to the museum, as well as by museum membership, a notably easier and more inviting system that had previously been in place.<sup>70</sup> Screenings were held daily, beginning with one per day and quickly turning into two per day, often with a Saturday matinee designed for children.<sup>71</sup>

Throughout 1939, the museum welcomed an estimated eighteen hundred visitors per day, five hundred of whom were reported to have frequented the film library's screenings.<sup>72</sup> In other words, films not only garnered a full theater but also attracted almost one-third of the museum's visitors.<sup>73</sup> The screening schedule was announced weekly to the press, and the library's research resources were also opened to the public, available for reference use Monday through Saturday.<sup>74</sup> During this period the library acquired some sizable collections, including materials from D. W. Griffith and Douglas Fairbanks, and a continuous stream of films from France and the Soviet Union.<sup>75</sup> Both the Griffith acquisition and the Fairbanks acquisition became the primary material with which major retrospectives of their work were launched in 1940 and 1941, alongside a range of other programs. The Fairbanks show deserves special mention because it is the most innovative and surprising in the context of the museum's ongoing challenge to secure respect for its project.

The success of the Fairbanks program was marked by the sort of misbehaving audience whose description began this book. Audiences cheered, hissed, and applauded new and old Fairbanks films. The show reportedly drew an audience of tremendous size and diversity, including, according to a press release,

People making special trips from nearby states to pay homage to a man they worshipped twenty years ago. Middle-aged men who confide to



FIGURE 19. Film theater and auditorium (Titus I), Museum of Modern Art. Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

museum attendants that Fairbanks was their boyhood hero and they never hope to recapture the old thrill of seeing him again. Superman, Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon fans have been hurrying along to the museum to investigate the rumor that an older generation was even luckier in its superman. Streams of small boys who had never heard of the museum and who have had word-of-mouth news of a new and greater film star, Douglas Fairbanks.<sup>76</sup>

Reports further indicated that audiences were so big they had to be turned away at the door, and the program of films extended due to popular demand (figure 20). Rather than admonish the audience or express frustration over its boisterous behavior, the library staff bragged about these very same things in their regular press releases:

Many of the New York public that attend the library's showings come out of interested curiosity. These past two months they have stayed to cheer—an experience that is unique for the museum's handsome auditorium. After the fencing scenes of *The Three Musketeers*, the theatre has resounded with applause and cheers that would be rare in a modern movie audience, and the first appearance of Fairbanks in *The Mark of Zorro*, *The Black Pirate* and *The Thief of Bagdad* calls forth a round of applause that is usually reserved for newsreel shots of presidents.<sup>77</sup>



FIGURE 20. Crowds waiting to see films from the American Film Comedy series, 1940. Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Importantly, the success of the Fairbanks show led to the design of the next major show planned and executed by the library entitled *Forty Years of American Film Comedy*.

The press release for this show demonstrates unusual verve, openly referring to the discomfort and oddity of asserting simultaneously that “movies are the proper study of mankind” and that they are also to be enjoyed, laughed at, and celebrated for their levity. It read: “Instruction will thus be provided by Professors Mack Sennett, Frank Capra, W. C. Fields, Harpo and Groucho Marx, Robert Benchley and Charlie Chaplin in a new appraisal of screen comedy reviewed in the light of history.”<sup>78</sup> Such language echoed the derisive and dispensary comments made in some of the New York press about MoMA’s other screenings. Yet it seems that the popularity of the shows was worth more than dogmatic adherence to what were proving to be ideals of studious and mannered watching that were difficult if not impossible to enforce. The library presented at least some of its programs with tongue firmly in cheek.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Fairbanks program and the comedy cycle, along with a series entitled *Great Actresses of the Past*, reportedly were the most popular of the museum’s screenings during these first years.<sup>79</sup> The actress cycle was composed of shorts, excerpts, and features highlighting four important stage actresses: Gabrielle Réjane in *Madame Sans Gene* (André Calmettes, 1911); Sarah Bernhardt in *Camille* (1912); Minnie Fiske in *Vanity Fair* (Charles Brabin, 1915); and Eleonora Duse in *Cenere* (Arturo Ambrosio, 1916). The audience consisted of contemporary celebrities as well as students of acting and the stage.<sup>80</sup> The *Great Actresses* series clearly catered to the middlebrow and highbrow audience the museum so

desired. Yet, collectively, these programs stray somewhat from the core of any formalist and highbrow film history. Rather, they suggest a considerable degree of compromise with an audience that was far more interested in old films that entertained or informed—by their simple value as novelties, their enduring entertainment value, or their status as records of past styles, fashions, and other cultural rituals. Importantly, there is little evidence that, despite the library staff's persistent claims that their programs were for "serious study" and "attentive viewing," audiences readily acquiesced, yielding up little that resembled more conventionally reverent, observant, attentive, or obsequious modes of behavior.

The opportunities afforded by the new building did, of course, open the museum up to new and more organized criticism. Letters were written about the manner of presentation, about the nonseriousness of the audiences, and occasionally about the political persuasion of the program notes and film selection.<sup>81</sup> One of the most elaborate of these came from B. G. Braver-Mann and was played out on the pages of the *New York Times*. Braver-Mann stated:

For many weeks past I have been attending the film revivals at the Museum of Modern Art. After witnessing more than 90 per cent of the series I can hardly recall a single occasion on which the audience did not indulge either in loud and prolonged talking or in inexcusably boorish and raucous laughter throughout the showing. Why are these films being presented to the general public? Is it to hold up their creators-masters of the art like Griffith, Stroheim and Murnau to ridicule and contempt?<sup>82</sup>

Braver-Mann reports that he had recently attended a screening wherein "a young man loudly and with uninhibited profanity upbraided an audience that had been snickering and guffawing" throughout a screening of *Greed*. He continued: "The evil, unfortunately, is a dual one and is not confined to the undeveloped psychology of the audience alone. As one spectator remarked to me after *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* had drawn two hours of wisecracks and horse laughs from a typically rowdy mob of sophisticates, 'they laugh on principle; not because there is anything especially funny or ridiculous on the screen.'" <sup>83</sup> Laughter was a complicated thing at MoMA. It came from people who clearly found humor in some obvious and some unusual places. Yet it also emanated from those who thought the presence of these films at a museum to be utterly absurd. According to critics such as Braver-Mann, this laughter was proof of MoMA's subservience to a form of cinema idealized by an entertainment industry interested only in sustaining its own illusions.

Library staff in part acquiesced to what seemed the unpreventable use of museum film screenings as counterpoint to the decorum of museum galleries. Yet their efforts to find some semblance of serious viewing continued. For instance, the museum began to orchestrate special screenings for children on Saturdays, which ran regularly from 1940. In doing so, it sought to discourage the attendance of children at its regular programs by directing them toward comedies and other adventure serials specifically designed for a younger audience. Library staff explicitly rejected the use of the library's screenings as a reprieve for children from the reserved rituals of art, or for the reprieve of parents from their children. Separating children from MoMA's preferred adult audience was one way library staff sought to evoke this sense of seriousness and a new controlled mode of viewing.<sup>84</sup> There is little evidence that this strategy was successful. Nor is there much indication of whether or not children were in fact inciting disturbances at regular screenings. Nonetheless, the Film Library's battle to secure its well-behaved audience continued.

Among the more political of struggles faced by library staff were debates that pitted non-American films (usually Soviet films) directly against American values. One of the well-known controversies of the period developed after an exhibit entitled *Ten Programs: French, German and Russian Films*. In addition to the impending dismissal of Luis Buñuel, Jay Leyda was forced to leave shortly thereafter, having been identified on the pages of the *New Leader*, a labor weekly, as "an important propaganda commissar in Moscow" who spread "international propaganda boosting Soviet movies." Both departures resulted from controversies stemming from fears that the films the library showed were "ungodly" or overly friendly to Stalinist causes.<sup>85</sup> Other letters to the *New York Times*, to the library staff, and to Nelson Rockefeller himself, then president of MoMA, further registered complaints of anti-American bias at the museum.<sup>86</sup> D. W. Griffith himself sent a rather rude missive to Rockefeller objecting to Barry's position as curator of his planned landmark show in 1940. In this letter, Griffith submitted that he and other film attendees were dismayed that Barry regularly expressed more enthusiasm for the recent spate of Soviet films shown at the museum than for Griffith's homegrown American ones. Griffith conceded that this was understandable, given that Barry herself was "foreign." His argument against Barry grew. He cited numerous conversations with unnamed people who also felt that she seemed consistently and notably unfriendly to American films in general. He continued: "Now I don't pretend to be damn brilliant or dipped deeply in the wine of sophistication but I, as an American, made pictures mostly for the Americans and

I believe on the whole the American people have liked my pictures very well."<sup>87</sup> Griffith's Americanist populism did not win out in the end. Rockefeller responded politely but directly. In the end, Barry curated the show, which also served as the basis for a lasting and influential book.<sup>88</sup>

An internal report issued in 1940, crafted by Alistair Cooke for Barry, confirmed a notable increase in criticism of the library's programs as being too heavily weighted toward what he termed the "esoteric," a euphemism for non-American and experimental films. But he accepted this possible imbalance as a way to respond to the other criticism commonly received by the library that, in fact, it was too friendly not toward the foreign film but toward the American industry:

If there is a fault, it is one which I know you are well aware of—namely the apparent preponderance of European over American film. But, as I think we have agreed privately, this fault, if it is one, has its political compensation: for it helps silence the belligerent art-cynics who are always ready to say we truckle to the trade but deliberately ignore great achievements of the *prenez-garde* [avant-garde] film in Corsica.<sup>89</sup>

Clearly, the film library's programs and its institutionalization of film art displeased many individuals for many reasons. The result was an ongoing process of negotiation, balancing different kinds of complaints with changing funding sources, as well as shifting ideas about what film art might be and what it might become. The location of the programs at one prestigious site within the main museum building, from mid-1939 onward, lent the Film Library greater visibility, authority, and occasional praise. Yet it also rendered it increasingly vulnerable to criticism through letters and pronouncements public and private.

#### THE AMERICAN SCREEN

Throughout these early years, the bulk of public attention to the Film Library did not relate directly to the idea that film was a high art or to the notion of exclusivity or elitism but to the novel idea of the relationship of old American films to various forms of history. Grouped under the titles *A Short Survey of the Film in America* and *Some Memorable American Films*, old American films from the archive were arranged in historical narratives, generating diverse and telling commentary. The claim that the Film Library was un-American surfaced publicly only as the library departed from its early strategy of foregrounding American films and gave measurable time to non-American films. This changed most notably with the exhibitions

held in the new museum building, which likely gave the library a firmer sense of its own permanence and hence invited greater risks with its programming. Also looming in the background were the mounting tides of war.

There is no doubt that as the years passed and more films were acquired, the Film Library's exhibition practices became more international and more comprehensive. Few records remain that indicate in any detail when precisely particular films were acquired or what kinds of rights were acquired along with them, thus hindering a rigorous analysis of the material and legal factors that contributed to archiving and programming decisions. Sufficient corroborating evidence suggests, however, that the first two circulating programs were not only a result of resourceful programming from the slimmest of pickings but also a reflection of the library staff's early concern to win industry and public approval. A resonant strain of American populism—evident throughout many of the discourses generated by staff during these first crucial years—underscores this. Perhaps counterintuitively, though Americanist discourses were co-articulated with the importance of seriously studying films, the overwhelming response to the first programs was to their surprising quaintness. This tendency persisted despite the eventual and explicit rejection of this idea in library literature. In 1937, Barry attacked the tendency outright, asserting that library films were not intended to be seen as “old” films, “primarily risible or quaint like an ‘old’ (but not yet antique or venerable) costume.”<sup>90</sup> The fact of this kind of reception was not itself laughable to library staff; it continued to plague them. It also did not please the Rockefeller Foundation. An internal foundation report formally articulated the problem:

The primary aim of the original grant was to create discrimination among motion-picture goers by giving them a chance to see the best and most significant films that had been produced in earlier years. Programs have left something to be desired for their maximum effect on audiences. At present the effect on audiences seems to be little more than a new experience of films which in many cases have been seen some years before; sometimes the outcome has been merely a feeling of the quaintness of earlier production methods.<sup>91</sup>

How to make watching studious, informed, and productive of the civic model sought by the Rockefeller Foundation? No clear or simple solution was immediately found; the limits of MoMA's own efforts became more than evident.

The Film Library was a complex institution with a complex task: to gather film's scattered history within the limits and possibilities offered by an American art museum. Film art was a notably heterogeneous and con-



tested concept during this period, and the Film Library set out to collect a reasonably wide range of film types. In addition to saving films, the library also aspired to engender historical and critical viewing sensibilities, in part, by ensuring that these films would be seen. Its circulating exhibitions provide one measure for evaluating the institutional shape given to “film art” and “film history” during this period, a shape that was notably middlebrow but also inflected with considerable populism: film was an art of the people. MoMA’s extensive public relations efforts, and the responses engendered by them, are equally important, signaling another aspect of the library’s public persona. The film department’s efforts to exhibit German, French, Soviet, and documentary films during this same period are also important and overlooked elements in the history of their activities and of film culture generally.

By focusing on the idea of old films, a phrase used continuously throughout this literature, I have argued that saving film art was prefigured by a more fundamental shift: the discursive and institutional endowment of old films with historical significance. MoMA made the exhibition of old films a cutting-edge cultural formation, reissuing the found objects of forgotten culture as foundational elements of present-day knowledge. It was a form of curation that drew notice, both as a method of affirming American accomplishment and as powerful mode of thinking about the past. Through its programs, its press releases, and its other public relations efforts, the Film Library catalyzed a flash of historical consciousness in specialized and popular contexts alike. This historical consciousness was characterized by ideas about nation and heritage, but it also drew upon nostalgia, trivia, popular memory, and the very basic idea of film-as-records. Yet there was another side to the publicness of MoMA’s film programs. In concert with the international growth of film archives, film societies, and little theaters and the nascent interest in studying films apparent at universities, libraries, schools, and museums, the Film Library’s programs resonated widely. They both reflected and also further enacted a widespread concern to institutionalize film viewing, differentiating it from mass commercial moviegoing and inflecting it with the ideals of attentive watching. The museum not only offered a powerful articulation of film study’s importance for a new mode of spectatorship and cultural engagement but also provided the basic means by which others might do the same. The growth of this network provides a complement to the widespread popular discourses generated by library programs. In short, the response to and impact of MoMA’s early efforts to exhibit films indicate varied and uneven reactions that collectively cleared the way for a new common sense about cinema.

## 6 Enduring Legacies

In his well-known book, *The Tastemakers* (1949), Russel Lynes charts a curious yet compelling phenomenon. In an effort to wrestle with the vexing movement of cultural value, he proposes to map the shifting assignations of select objects. Among them, there are two items of particular interest. On the one hand, he asserts that James Whistler's painting *Arrangement in Gray and Black, No. 1* (commonly known as *Whistler's Mother*) began as a highbrow object, born into the precious reserve of fine art. Yet from the last third of the nineteenth century to the second half of the twentieth century, the same painting underwent a bathetic metamorphosis. No doubt aided by the use of the image on a U.S. postal stamp issued in 1934, Lynes claimed *Mother* plummeted from highbrow to lowbrow status in a period of less than sixty years. On the other hand, Lynes posits that *At the Crossroads of Life* (Biograph, 1908), a film attributed to D. W. Griffith, traveled a rather different trajectory, a rapid ascent in cultural value. In sharp contrast to Whistler's painting, the film began lowbrow and made a deft leap to highbrow status by the mid-1950s. In just forty years, according to Lynes, the film evolved from common street fare to exalted art object, dignified and emblematic of good taste and aesthetic sophistication.<sup>1</sup>

There can be no doubt that inexpensive reproductions of art objects such as paintings quickly changed the means by which the value of art was negotiated in the first half of the twentieth century. Museum gift shops, postcards, and the common reproduction of art in newspapers and magazines served to rapidly liquidate the sanctity of art. These are only three symptoms typifying the underlying conditions described famously by Walter Benjamin as art's "technological reproducibility." The appetites of consumer capitalism and ongoing struggles over cultural value also deserve credit.<sup>2</sup> Yet, concurrent with this was a parallel project to wrest the

reproducible away from the flows of modern life and to make select cultural forms into discrete and unique objects, to grant them endurance through time and uniqueness in space. With regard to cinema, some sought simply to imbue film with the aura previously reserved for art; others sought to redefine art itself. It would be too simple to suggest that MoMA's Film Library singularly caused the inflation of Griffith's film within extant cultural hierarchies. Yet MoMA clearly catalyzed an ongoing shift in the culture of cinema and the shifting value of select films. It showed old movies in an art museum, exhibiting the found objects of an ephemeral and mass cultural phenomenon in an institution of considerable international authority. In doing so, the library altered the field on which film's value was transforming, casting particular films in relief from the indomitable currents of history's march.

MoMA tested previously distinct cultural spheres. Highbrow, lowbrow, and middlebrow films became smaller elements in a larger and notably slippery continuum, whose vestiges worked their way through Ivy League universities, modern art galleries and museums, amateur clubs, department stores, and movie theaters. Film linked them all in an unusual network of lasting influence, paving the way for the "classics," "art," and "foreign," film sections in suburban video rental outlets, Wal-Mart megastores, and pay-per-view movie services. In the 1930s, film became a more clearly defined object. This brokered a qualitatively different network for the movement of that object, across and within a proliferating set of institutions and everyday spaces: homes, schools, libraries, and retail outlets. Preparing the way for television, computers, and the World Wide Web, these changes ensured that viewing moving images would become more private, more disciplined by cultural institutions, and more integral to full participation in democratic life.

The Film Library became one of an emergent series of institutions forwarding the values of educated film viewing, studious attention, face-to-face discussion, and, most important, structured criteria by which films would be engaged. The model was not simply one that conceived of select films as valuable or edifying unto themselves but also one predicated on particular ideas about the spaces in which films might be viewed and hence written and argued about, discussed, elaborated, and critiqued. Also at root here is an attempt to reconceive of the film audience, one that can be differentiated in part by the films it watches and in part by the *ways* in which it watches. Transforming cinema from a passing amusement to an educated encounter also involved differentiating the mass audience—an unknowable and dangerous population—from the distinct, active, and identifiably

thinking audiences that were being both imagined and institutionalized throughout this period.

Throughout the literature generated by the Film Library, there are notably vague uses of powerful concepts such as art, influence, and history. At times the influence of film was linked to its popularity, and at other times it was linked to its impact on aesthetic innovation. Precise definitions of film art were rarely offered. Iris Barry and the library staff carried these seeming contradictions through many of their lectures and publications. The tension resided not only in the idea that the *same medium* might yield both high and popular art objects as well as sociological documents, a characteristic of many other media such as books and paintings, but that the *same film* might also embody these various forms of value. This conundrum—which points to the different idealist, institutional, industrial, and populist methods by which a medium's relative value may be identified—was simply not addressed in the great bulk of Film Library publications. This tension is, however, implicit in the library's early programming, film notes, and other publications, which collectively presented films that had set popular fashions and caused moral panics alongside films it considered markers of formal aesthetic development and achievement. What kind of art was film? The answer to this question was posed within the broader rubric of film's significance as an educational and historical object as well as a viewing experience. The disputed concept of film art and the attempt to resolve this tension through invoking the more generally malleable and perhaps middlebrow concept of film's educational value and historical significance permutated across key constituencies: Film Library staff, MoMA trustees, members of the film industry, and the Rockefeller Foundation. Particular aesthetic configurations from the past served, at least temporarily, to denaturalize dominant visual forms of the present while linking the two through trembling grasps toward widely disseminated film histories. They also served to associate their particularities with contiguous social and cultural configurations—real or imagined, remembered or forgotten.

I have argued in this book that the birth of the first national institution of film art was both a symptom and a cause of changing ideas and practices of cinema. It grew out of a series of material and institutional shifts in film culture, accompanied by an identifiable set of discourses that embodied ongoing tensions still visible in today's multimediated culture: What is the source of film's value? What are the mechanisms by which this value changes? What other media play a constitutive role in the meanings of cinema? What other institutions? MoMA's Film Library embodied ongoing trends in film culture and catalyzed others. I have argued that one of its

most noteworthy interventions was to make old, popular films more widely available to an emergent and specialized audience. The Film Library was, in a sense, the first national repertory theater, yet it also introduced ideas about cinema to a public that expanded far beyond spectators or film audiences per se. Museumgoers, magazine subscribers, and newspaper readers all encountered an emergent sensibility for a new kind of cinema. Forwarding its own brand of film education through program notes, press releases, and nationally distributed publications, Film Library staff ensured that select films would enjoy a more complex relationship to time, and that film's history would be a part of the visual present. The library also provides one example of a museological institution not initially linked to film that grew to exercise enormous influence on our most basic understanding of why and how we watch movies.

Film institutions have always been underwritten by varied conceptions of why film matters and therefore also by wider assumptions concerning who should do what, on whose behalf, and to what end in the name of film. Cinephiles, moral reformers, and industry spokespeople have long argued that watching films should be an integral part of our civic and cultural institutions as an emblem of a progressive culture and an unparalleled method of knowing the world. Long before Bentham's panopticon and surely long after debates about digital technologies and Internet filters, the allure of the visual and its promise of social transformation—to control, to educate, to overthrow—has played a lasting role in the history of such institutions. Film societies, little theaters, educational film libraries, study guides in classrooms, amateur exhibition, nontheatrical film libraries—these institutions punctuate such shifts. They became methods by which a growing number of people organized their public and private lives, often reacting against commercial control of the cinema itself. While these projects from the beginning adopted a wide variety of sociopolitical agendas, many shared private endowments and ostensibly public mandates, and some demonstrated internationalist perspectives on film. All of them sought to shape the public sphere of cinema through the specificities of their particular viewing formations and their networks of films.

The Film Library embodied a range of such impulses, while capitalizing on the most affirmative and less radical among them. Despite the documented controversies, its project was by and large safe. Its programs built on a long history of expanded exhibition, supported by itinerant exhibitors, rural networks, YMCAs, art galleries, amateur associations, schools, and museums. In its emphasis on narrative films, it also affirmed the norms and

conventions developed out of film's industrial and corporate base, shaping but not radically altering definitions of cinematic style that had been consolidating since the 1910s. Yet MoMA self-consciously distinguished itself by invoking the rhetoric of film art and film appreciation as it discursively framed its programs to its public. In doing so, it did not simply advocate for the formal criteria by which particular films might be considered high art or seek to vindicate a maligned medium by invoking middlebrow sensibilities of moral elevation and edification. It did so also by drawing upon an expanding set of ideas and practices that shaped emergent institutional configurations of film viewing: mindful and attentive rather than ostensibly mindless and distracted. Film Library staff carefully attempted to sidestep the elitism implicit in their ideal audience, constantly lending credence to the power of popular films and the uniqueness of cinema as a living art of the people.

Building a Film Library based on principles of inclusion and access required resources gathered from established corporate and social interests. Wealthy patrons, including the Rockefellers, brought the contradictory wonders of philanthropy to film. Hollywood involvement brought glamour and legitimation and contributed to the expansion of its own machine—now officially integrated into America's heritage and identity. In the absence of state support for such a project, actively working to instill film with historicity depended on this. Film art and film history were loose, rhetorical categories used to justify an archival intervention, as well as the development of specialized audiences. Both were characterized by extreme compromise. Moreover, the ideas of the archive and differentiated viewing were intimately related, fueled at MoMA largely by the idea of making cinema more respectable by invoking what can be loosely categorized as middle-class sensibilities. In the 1930s, ideas about film art, film history, and cultural institutions converged on the site of the Film Library, retrieving a lost past for an inchoate future using cinematic art as the conduit. Building a collection of films was the necessary substructure for the whole of the project.

The Film Library, therefore, marks an important and telling intervention into the conditions under which film's value unfolded, institutionally embodying the intellectual and material possibility of extending debates about this value in time and space through the condensed, concentrated space of the archive. Equally important is the way in which this possibility was shaped and constrained by contemporary interests—public and private—that converged upon the archival site. The Film Library provides one

example of how these interests came to bear on discourses and practices that address the question of film as an object of broad historical and cultural concern. It is equally evident that the Film Library emerged at a time when new ideas about museums were taking hold, embracing the means and methods not just of technological reproducibility but of mediated systems that restructured the very idea of a museum itself.

By considering the Film Library a germane site upon which many interests collided, interacted, and were resolved, this book demonstrates that in the 1930s saving films and exhibiting them to specialized audiences was neither a simple nor an uncontested practice. The library was used variously to criticize, to explore, to celebrate, and to think about the nature of representation, the rise of the culture industries, and even the conditions of modernity itself. As Miriam Hansen has written, the cinema was

the single most expansive discursive horizon in which the effects of modernity were reflected, rejected or denied, transmuted or negotiated. It was both part and prominent symptom of the crisis as which modernity was perceived, and at the same time it evolved into a social discourse in which a wide variety of groups sought to come to terms with the traumatic impact of modernization. This reflexive dimension of cinema, its dimension of *publicness*, was recognized by intellectuals early on, whether they celebrated the cinema's emancipatory potential or, in alliance with the forces of censorship and reform, sought to contain and control it, adapting the cinema to the standards of high culture and the restoration of the bourgeois public sphere.<sup>3</sup>

According to Hansen, the cinema is both a real and an imagined space whereupon disparate social forces have acted and through which diverse discourses have been generated. The cinema is an *effect* of modernity that also came to provide a *method* by which its, and other, effects were made sense of, negotiated with, and protested against. The Film Library is an institution inextricably linked to circulating conceptions pertaining to the value of films themselves. Thus, if film can be considered an expansive discursive horizon, then the Film Library (and, indeed, other film institutions) might be thought of as a recognizable site on this horizon, which along the way influenced other kinds of cultural objects and debates (e.g., What is modern art? What is a modern museum?). In other words, the Film Library functioned as a figurative and actual place upon which to explore one manifestation of cinema's *publicness*, the reflexive quality of cinema as both a symptom of, and negotiation with, modern ideas about cultural value and visual history. Film institutions are shared public sites—real and imagined—that embody the tensions and complexities of film and its related

phenomena. The Film Library was also a brick-and-mortar place through which specific forces acted to shape the cinema and the role it plays in cultural debate.

The sizable impact of MoMA's film activities and the broader shifts of which they are a part continue to influence the way we encounter and think about films. MoMA's Film Library effected a broad and lasting shift in film culture, providing a prescient statement about the direction of film study and criticism, in particular, and film exhibition, in general, from its founding to the present. In the 1930s, film gained purchase on the material and institutional requirements for an object-based approach to what previously had been a largely ephemeral medium whose circulation was beholden to the logics of commercial entertainment and popular memory. MoMA shaped what it meant to study cinema. Films were dated, arranged chronologically, and linked to wider debates about humanistic and sociological knowledge. The Film Library engendered studious sensibilities about what it meant to watch, yet it also generated a material infrastructure for this mode of watching. Both celluloid and paper materials were made available to scholars, reformers, and those who were both. Film societies, film study groups, and university film courses depended for decades on the films MoMA made available, allowing for the consistent implementation of curriculum and the distribution of books required to build disciplines in a modern university. The history of film study is intimately linked to projects such as MoMA's, which clearly provided material and intellectual direction for a phenomenon that was otherwise ill suited to the conventions of scholarship. Both film study and film culture continue to embody that pull between film as a set of ephemeral images and as an object that sits on a shelf, both open to endless interrogation and reworking.

The clear impact of MoMA on our most basic ideas about what cinema is directs us to consider other such institutions. Cognate organizations and ideals require further investigation. Politically radical, aesthetically conservative, and unrelentingly governmental forces have long shaped film culture: foreign embassies, state grants, philanthropies, history and technology museums, public libraries. Such organizations have acted alongside basic technological shifts—16mm, 8mm, VHS, DVD, and the World Wide Web—shaping cinema practice and irrefutably influencing cultural life. As cinema studies shifts toward media studies, the fact of cinema's determined and multi-institutional life will only play a more critical role. Each transformation of cinema's technological infrastructure feeds emergent interfaces with the shifting patterns of cultural life, reorganizing our modes of engagement and points of access. Cinema is changing; our modes of analy-



sis must also adapt. This is true for the ways in which we think about not only the present context of the moving image but also its past. If there is one thing confirmed by the history of the Film Library, it is surely that cinematic time, historical time, and institutional time are far from linear, unchanging, or simple.

As distribution and exhibition patterns shifted with the arrival of television and the proliferation of 16mm projectors after the war, the Film Library marks a distinct point on an expanding map of cross-contextual, cross-historical image circulation and serves as a concrete example of the material, ideological, and intellectual currents informing this movement. The popular and so-called art film became less dependent on theatrical exhibition and continued its journey toward more varied methods of distribution and exhibition. While Hollywood was busy honing its production methods and circumscribing film form, the film culture that had built up around it, through it, and despite it was simultaneously busy developing new ways to understand films—in this case old films—through forging new modes of engaging them: collecting, writing, watching. Such methods were inevitably undergirded by class-based and gender-based conceptions about appropriate viewing behavior, ideas that both reaffirmed dominant prejudices and eventually politicized moving images and provoked film audiences in the 1960s and beyond to contest those very same dispositions.

The organization that began as the Film Library in 1935 has undergone several name changes since its inception: the Department of Film, the Department of Film and Video, and most recently the Department of Film and Media. Such changes index the broad cultural shifts in which moving images have long participated and in which they will continue to participate. The organizations that followed MoMA—the George Eastman House, the various film programs of the Library of Congress, Cinema 16, Anthology Film Archives, the American Film Institute (AFI)—have stepped in to fill the blanks, correct the imbalances, and otherwise provide counterpoints to the Film Library's changing practices. They, too, change (witness the AFI's endorsement of the monopolistic business practices of Blockbuster Video, a subsidiary of the media behemoth Viacom International, through allowing it to use its "100 Best American Films" lists in its rental stores as both a way to display a sanctioned assortment of films and to label individual videos and DVDs). Yet the early successes of such institutions have migrated away from the celluloid-projector infrastructures that predominated from the 1920s until the early 1980s. Specialized moving image cultures subsist now on laser discs and DVDs, on cable and satellite TV, and at an exploding number of film festivals. Similarly to when the Film Library

was formed, commercial interests present an overwhelming force. Indeed, even during the 1950s and 1960s, when the Film Library's influence was at its peak, small commercial distributors began to buy the rights to American independent and European produced films, forcing MoMA to withdraw its circulating copies. Today digital forms have dramatically increased title availability, further diminishing the size and scope of MoMA's circulating programs and their consequent influence. Some speculate that MoMA's success has come full circle, marking now its imminent demise and perhaps failure. Using 16mm films and projectors, the film culture MoMA helped to create has outgrown the institution's capacity to adequately feed its voracious on-demand appetite. In assessing the fullness of such transformations, I remain convinced that Iris Barry would be delighted at the thought that her odd little project has culminated in such a profoundly transparent, if complex, common sense about cinema.



## APPENDIX

# Film Programs of the Museum of Modern Art, 1934–1949

*Note: The following chronology is culled from available material held by the Museum of Modern Art Film Study Center, Archive, and Library in New York. Among the materials consulted are newspaper clippings, press releases, program notes, and the Department of Film's Exhibition Series, Special Collections, Film Study Center.*

Before 1939, Film Library screenings were often held off-site because the museum did not have suitable facilities. For the purposes of the following chronology, when the screening was held off-site, the location is noted. The library adopted several organizational principles for its exhibitions. A primary schema was to design an umbrella theme (e.g., A Short Survey of the Film in America) and then to develop subthemes within that (e.g., "The Development of Narrative," "The Talkies"). Individual films would then fall under these more specific subthemes. These larger surveys were usually conducted over an extended period, anywhere from several days to months. During the first four years of the library's exhibitions, its films would, as a rule, premiere in New York and thereafter become available to educational groups across the country for rental. After 1939, similar models were used, but shorter programs and single-event screenings became more frequent. This list is not comprehensive, though it is a thorough indication of the kinds of programming logics enacted by the library from available evidence. For more specific information on individual films that were shown, consult the records and files for particular exhibits. These are held in the Department of Film Exhibition Series. Museum press releases can also be useful in this regard. Importantly, the Department of Film has held many special events and private screenings, hosted conferences, or-

chestrated circulating exhibits, and so on, only some of which are noted here.

The following list is organized chronologically, with the program title (as it appeared in original documentation). All screenings were held in New York at MoMA unless otherwise indicated.

1934

October 28–December 30, 1934  
The Motion Picture, 1914–1934  
Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut

1935

April 25, 1935  
“Program of Films”  
The Film Society of Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges, Haverford College

August 24, 1935  
A Special Program Given at Pickfair (select clips)  
Pickfair, Hollywood

October 18, 1935  
A Lecture and Two Films: Fernand Léger  
MoMA

1936

January 7, 1936  
A Short Survey of the Film in America, 1895–1932: The Development of Narrative, 1894–1911  
MoMA

February 4, 1936  
A Short Survey of the Film in America, 1895–1932: The Rise of the American Film  
Dalton School

March 3–4, 1936  
A Short Survey of the Film in America, 1895–1932: D. W. Griffith  
Dalton School

April 7–8, 1936  
A Short Survey of the Film in America, 1895–1932: The German Influence  
Dalton School

May 5–6, 1936

A Short Survey of the Film in America, 1895–1932: The Talkies  
Dalton School

May 10, 1936

A Program of Documentary Films  
Mayflower Hotel, Washington, DC

Some Memorable American Films

The exhibition date for this series cannot be identified precisely at this time. I have noted the dates upon which the programs were available for circulation. If this exhibition follows the example set by the others, the films in this series were likely shown at the Museum of Natural History on or around the date noted.

January 1, 1936

Some Memorable American Films, 1896–1934:  
The Western Film

February 1, 1936

Some Memorable American Films, 1896–1934:  
Comedies

March 1, 1936

Some Memorable American Films, 1896–1934:  
The Film and Contemporary History

April 1, 1936

Some Memorable American Films, 1896–1934:  
Mystery and Violence

May 1, 1936

Some Memorable American Films, 1896–1934:  
Screen Personalities

1937

January 10, 1937

The Film in Germany and in France: The Film in Germany, Legend and  
Fantasy  
American Museum of Natural History

January 24, 1937

The Film in Germany and in France: The Film in Germany, The Moving  
Camera  
American Museum of Natural History

February 7, 1937

The Film in Germany and in France: The Film in Germany, Pabst and Realism  
American Museum of Natural History

February 21, 1937

The Film in Germany and in France: The Film in France, From Lumiere to  
René Clair  
American Museum of Natural History

March 7, 1937

The Film in Germany and in France: The Film in France, The Advance Guard  
American Museum of Natural History

March 9–April 10, 1937

*You Only Live Once* (the making of a modern movie by Fritz Lang)  
(gallery show)

March 21, 1937

The Film in Germany and in France: The Film in Germany, *Siegfried*  
American Museum of Natural History

April 4, 1937

The Film in Germany and in France: The Film in France, *Entr'acte*, *The Fall of  
the House of Usher*, *Joie de vivre*  
American Museum of Natural History

April 18, 1937

The Film in Germany and in France: The Film in Germany, *Metropolis*  
American Museum of Natural History

Summer 1937

A Brief Survey of the American Film from 1895 to the Present Day  
(stills and photographs)  
Concourse Level, 14 West Forty-ninth Street (Rockefeller Center; temporary  
galleries)

November 17, 1937

The Swedish Film and Post-War American Films: *Seastrom* and *Stiller*  
American Museum of Natural History

December 1, 1937

The Swedish Film and Post-War American Films: The Swedish-American Film  
American Museum of Natural History

December 21, 1937–February 14, 1938

The Making of a Contemporary Film: From Script to Preview: *The Adven-  
tures of Tom Sawyer*  
(gallery show)

1938

February 23, 1938

The Swedish Film and Post-War American Films: *Greed*  
American Museum of Natural History

March 17, 1938

A Talk by Barrett Kiesling on the short subject film (select films screened)

May 24–July 17, 1938

Exhibition of American Art, 1609–1938: Films  
(three sections: film stills, Making of a Contemporary Film: *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, three 50-minute American film history anthologies)  
Musée du Jeu de Paume, Paris

NEW MUSEUM BUILDING OPENS MAY 1939

May 11–October 1, 1939 (extended to November 6, 1939)

A Cycle of Seventy Films, 1895–1935 (in conjunction with the exhibition Art in Our Time)

Subcategories:

The Development of Narrative

The Rise of the American Film

The Basis of a Cycle of Seventy Films, 1895–1935: Modern Technique (in conjunction with the exhibition Art in Our Time: Modern Technique)

The Sociological Film

The Intimate Photoplay

Stage into Screen

The German Film (I)

War in Retrospect (I)

The Western Film

Fairbanks and the Costume Piece

The Swedish Film: Seastrom and Stiller

The French Film (I): From Lumière to René Clair

The German Film (II): The Moving Camera

Von Stroheim the Realist

Comedies

War in Retrospect (II)

The French Film (II): The Advance Guard

Ancestors of Documentary



The Documentary Film (I)  
The Documentary Film (II)  
The German Film (III): The New Realism  
Comedies (II)  
The Swedish-American Film  
The German-American Film  
The Gangster Film (I)  
The End of the Silent Era  
The Talkies Arrive  
The Musical Comedy Film  
The Gangster Film (II)  
Stage into Screen (II)  
The Film and Contemporary History  
The Sociological Film (II)

May–October 1939

Georges Méliès, Magician and Film Pioneer: 1861–1938  
(films and other materials)

July 6, 1939

*The Movies March On*

(March of Time premiere and reception)

July 1939

Enlarged Edison strip from *The Great Train Robbery*  
(part of larger display of MoMA's paintings)  
Music Hall Lounge (Radio City Music Hall)

November 7–26, 1939

Highlights from a Cycle of 70 Films.

Subcategories:

The Rise of the American Film  
Stage into Screen (I): Great Actresses of the Past  
The Basis of Modern Technique  
The German Film (I): Legend and Fantasy  
Fairbanks and the Costume Piece  
The Swedish Film: Seastrom and Stiller  
Von Stroheim the Realist  
The German Film (II): The Moving Camera

Comedies

Pabst and Realism

The Swedish American Film

The German Influence

Garbo Talks

Great Actresses of the Past

November 27, 1939–January 6, 1940

The Non-Fiction Film: From Uninterpreted Facts to Documentary

Subcategories:

Milestones of Documentary Development (I)

Milestones of Documentary Development (II)

Milestones of Documentary Development (III)

Travel and Exploration

Instructional Films

Housing

Labor

National Problems

History in the Making

Peoples of the Earth (I)

Peoples of the Earth (II)

The Narrative Film Absorbs Documentary Technique

1940

January 6, 1940

Children's Holiday Program of Magic Films (Méliès)

January 8–March 27, 1940

Ten Programs: French, German and Russian Films

January 15–18, 1940

Special Program of Unique Color Films

March 25–31, 1940

A Short History of Animation: The Cartoon 1879–1933

April 1–7, 1940

Three French Film Pioneers: Zecca, Cohl and Durand

April 1940

American Designs for Abstract Films

(paintings, drawings, gouaches, and collages by selected filmmakers)

April 8–14, 1940

Abstract Films

April 15–28, 1940

Great Actresses

April 16, 1940

The Films of Joris Ivens (special showing)

April 29–May 5, 1940

The March of Time

May 6–July 31, 1940

The Films of Douglas Fairbanks

Subcategories:

The Screen Character of Douglas Fairbanks

Easterner vs. Westerner

Debunker of Fads

The Cavalier (I)

The Cavalier (II)

Extravaganza

The Cavalier (III)

The Globe Trotter

August 1940–May 1941

Forty Years of American Film Comedy, Parts I and II.

November 12, 1940–January 5, 1941

D. W. Griffith: The Art of the Motion Picture

Subcategories:

Early Films: Griffith as Actor and Director

Griffith Evolves Screen Syntax

The Rise of the Feature Film

*The Birth of a Nation*

*Intolerance*

*Hearts of the World*

*Broken Blossoms*

*Orphans of the Storm*

*Isn't Life Wonderful*

1941

January 12, 1941

Music and Film

(clips from documentary films, sponsored by the League of Composers and the American Association of Documentary Films)

January 24, 1941

*Housing in Our Time* and *The Fight for Life*

(United States Housing Authority Films in association with the National Public Housing Conference)

May 20–September 3, 1941

Films of Britain at War

(in conjunction with exhibit *The Art of Britain at War*)

May 1941

Stills from the Studios

(in association with the Academy's Public Relations Institute)

June 30–October 31, 1941

A Cycle of 300 Films, Part I: The Silent Era

November 1, 1941–January 30, 1942

A Cycle of 300 Films, Part II: The Talkies

December 20, 1941–January 3, 1942

Holiday Film Matinees for Children

December 23, 1941–January 1942

Safety for the Citizen

(civilian defense films)

1942

February 2–February 7, 1942

Films for Latin America

February 8–February 14, 1942

American Defense Films

April 9, 1942

*The Land*

(premiere of a film by Robert Flaherty)

July 15–August 17, 1942

Walt Disney's *Bambi*: The Making of an Animated Sound Film

(drawings, photographs, painted cells, and film excerpts)

Young People's Gallery

Fall 1942

*The Film That Was Lost*

MGM, A Passing Parade film featuring the Film Library

December 7, 1942

United Nations Films

1943

January 26, 1943

*Yolanda*

(preview of a film by Mañuel Reachi)

February 15–May 29, 1943

Repeats from a Cycle of 300 Films

February 20–March 5, 1943

Victory Gardening Films

Spring 1943

*The Adoration of the Lamb*

(a glimpse of a Flemish masterpiece/painting in a film)

May 30–October 16, 1943

Film and Reality

Subcategories:

A Concert on Celluloid

German Propaganda Films

A Film from Soviet Russia

The Film Supplements Teaching

Films and Latin America

Films for Civilian Morale

An Outline of the Non-Fiction Film

The Dance in Film: 1909–1936

Fact Film History

August 29–September 18, 1943

The Dance in Film: 1909–1936

September 19, 1943–June 4, 1944

The History of an Art, 1895–1940: 45 Years of the Movies

Subcategories:

Beginnings

Comedy

Crime and Detection  
Drama and Melodrama  
The Epic Film  
Fantasy and Trick Films  
History and Biography  
Romance  
Social Films  
Travel and Adventure  
Westerns  
Special Programs

1944

February 1944  
Army-Navy Screen Magazine  
(screening for invited civilians)

March 21, 1944  
*Eagle versus Dragon*  
(press preview and reception)

April 1944  
Disney anniversary celebration

May 5, 1944  
Opera Films (special screening for members of the Metropolitan Opera)

June 4, 1944  
*The Negro Soldier* (a screening in honor of Harlem Week, with a performance by Duke Ellington and speech by Roi Otley)

June 5–September 3, 1944  
New Documentary Films: New Methods  
Subcategories:

Morale Films from the Office of War Information  
An Incentive Film from the Office of Strategic Services  
Orientation Film from the War Department  
Industrial Incentive Films from the U.S. Navy  
Meet the Latin Americans  
Documentaries from the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs

June 1944

German Propaganda Films, 1934–1940

Summer 1944

Film Programs for Young People

(regular Saturday screenings instituted for children)

Programs include:

The Western Film

Georges Méliès: Magician and Film Pioneer

Three French Film Pioneers: Zecca, Cohl, and Durand

Charlie Chaplin: Five Keystone Comedies

Comedy

The Serial Film

Charlie Chaplin: 4 Essanay Comedies

A Short History of Animation

The Color Film

Office of War Information Films (and various educational films)

1945

January 1–December 31, 1945

The Art of the Motion Picture 1895–1941

May 1945

Opera in Films

1946

January 1–July 14, 1946

The Documentary Film, 1922–1945

Subcategories:

An Outline of the Non-Fiction Film

Sources of Documentary

Travel Films: New Style (I)

The Documentary Film

The Advance Guard

Travel Films: New Style (II)

English Documentaries

Social Comments: Travel

English Documentaries: Social Problems

Travel and Anthropology

American Documentaries  
The Coming of War (I)  
Social Comment and Public Health (I)  
The Coming of War (II)  
Social Comment: Public Health (II)  
A Review of Documentary Film Development  
Films for Education  
Social Comment: Unemployment and Rural Electrification  
The Coming of War: German Propaganda Films  
The Coming of War  
English Wartime Documentaries (I)  
American Wartime Documentaries (I)  
The U.S. Army's Why We Fight Series  
The Army-Navy Screen Magazine  
American Wartime Documentaries (II): Office of Strategic Services  
American Wartime Documentaries (III): Army Air Forces  
American Wartime Documentaries (IV): OWI  
Wartime Documentaries  
International Exchange  
American Wartime Documentaries (V): Prosthesis and Psychiatry  
American Wartime Documentaries (VI): OWI Overseas  
Towards the Future  
American Wartime Documentaries (VII): Office of the Coordinator of  
Inter-American Affairs  
Canadian Documentaries  
The Anglo-American Film  
Masterpieces of Documentary

July 18–September 1, 1946  
Highlights of the Documentary Film

September 16, 1946–December 28, 1947  
The History of the Motion Picture, 1895–1946

1947

August 25–28, 1947  
*Olympia* (a film by Leni Riefenstahl), Part 1



August 29–31, 1947

*Olympia* (a film by Leni Riefenstahl), Part 2

October 15, 1947–January 4, 1948

Art and the Experimental Film

(sketches, still, photographs, and enlarged filmstrips)

December 29, 1947–January 4, 1948

Special Holiday Program of Color Films

1948

January 5–July 4, 1948

New Loans and Acquisitions

January 5–February 1, 1948

New Loans and Acquisitions: Four Academy Award–Winning Pictures Lent by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Hollywood

February 2–July 4, 1948

New Loans and Acquisitions: From the Library's Collections

May 3–16, 1948

*Le Million* (a film by René Clair)

May 25, 1948

Films of the United Nations

July 5, 1948–December 1949

Film Till Now (Part I)

1949

December 26, 1949–July 15, 1951

Film Till Now (Part II)

January 30–May 22, 1949

Sunday Night Film Shows

# Notes

## ABBREVIATIONS

AAA	Archives of American Art
FSC	Film Study Center, Department of Film and Media, Museum of Modern Art
MoMA	Museum of Modern Art, New York
MoMA Archives	Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York
MoMA Film Library	Museum of Modern Art Film Library, New York
MoMA Library	Museum of Modern Art Library, New York
RAC	Rockefeller Archive Center
SC-FSC	Special Collections, Film Study Center, Department of Film and Media, Museum of Modern Art

## CHAPTER 1. MAKING CINEMA A MODERN ART

1. Inge Benson, "A Boom in Pioneer Silent Films," *New York Herald Tribune*, October 20, 1940, Film Library Scrapbooks, Special Collections, Film Study Center, Department of Film and Media, Museum of Modern Art.

2. Charles L. Turner, "Witnessing the Development of Independent Film Culture in New York: An Interview with Charles L. Turner," interview by Ronald S. Magliozzi, *Film History* 12, no. 1 (2000): 72–96.

3. For an excellent overview of the various industrial, legal, material, and practical reasons that silent films disappeared, see David Pierce, "The Legion of the Condemned: Why American Silent Films Perished," *Film History* 9, no. 1 (1997): 5–22.

4. Boleslas Matuszewski, "A New Source for History" (1898), *Film History* 7, no. 3 (1995): 322–24; Franz Goerke, "Proposal for Establishing an Archive for Moving Pictures" (1912), trans. Cecilie L. French and Daniel J. Leab, *Historical*

*Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 16, no. 1 (1996): 9–12. For a fascinating examination of one such case, see Paula Amad, “Cinema’s ‘Sanctuary’: From Pre-documentary to Documentary Film in Albert Kahn’s *Archives de la Planète, 1908–1931*,” *Film History* 13, no. 2 (2001): 5–22; Edward S. Van Zile, *That Marvel—The Movies: A Glance at Its Reckless Past, Its Promising Present, and Its Significant Future* (New York: Putnam, 1923); Vachel Lindsay, *The Art of the Moving Picture* (1915; New York: Liveright, 1970), 254–55.

5. There is a growing body of work in the history of debates surrounding both successful and unsuccessful projects to build early film archives. For a look at an early British example, see Stephen Bottomore, “‘The Collection of Rubbish’: Animatographs, Archives and Arguments: London, 1896–97,” *Film History* 7, no. 3 (1995): 291–97. For a discussion of American developments, particularly at the Smithsonian and the Franklin Museum in Philadelphia, see H. Mark Gosser, “The Armat-Jenkins Dispute and the Museums,” *Film History* 2, no. 1 (1988): 1–12. For an overview of these debates nationally and internationally, see Alison Trope, “Le Cinéma Pour Le Cinéma: Making a Museum of the Moving Image,” *The Moving Image* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 29–67. Tropes shows that cinema, in fact, entered museums and archives as early as 1895 but only under a particular definition—as technological artifact and scientific achievement.

6. See Trope, “Le Cinema Pour Le Cinema,” 34; David Bordwell, *On the History of Film Style* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 23–34.

7. See, for instance, Terry Ramsaye, *A Million and One Nights: A History of the Motion Picture* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1926); Paul Rotha “Repertory Film Movement” (1931) and “A Museum for the Cinema” (1930), in *A Paul Rotha Reader*, ed. Duncan Petrie and Robert Kruger (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), 187–90, 191–94.

8. For just one example of this, see Iris Barry, “Films We Could See Again,” *Daily Mail*, June 16, 1927, 10, and Barry, “Twenty-Year-Old Films,” *Daily Mail*, June 21, 1928, 8.

9. It is widely assumed that 75 percent of all American silent films are lost and that 50 percent of all films made prior to 1950 are gone, though these figures are not fully supported by systematic research. For more on this, see Anthony Slide, *Nitrate Won’t Wait: A History of Film Preservation in the United States* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1992).

10. Carl Bohnenberger, “Genius and the Motion Picture,” *National Board of Review Magazine* 11, no. 1 (January 1936): 4–6, 13.

11. For the best general overview of nontheatrical film distribution and exhibition, see Anthony Slide, *Before Video: A History of Non-theatrical Film* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992).

12. For more on this, see Jan-Christopher Horak, “The First American Film Avant-Garde, 1919–1945,” in *Lovers of Cinema: The First American Film Avant-Garde, 1919–1945*, ed. Jan-Christopher Horak (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 14–66; see also Charles Wolfe, “The Poetics and Poli-

tics of Nonfiction: Documentary Film," in *Grand Design: Hollywood as Modern Business Enterprise, 1930–1939*, ed. Tino Balio (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 351–86.

13. Horak has outlined these conditions succinctly in "First American Film Avant-Garde," 14–66. Barbara Wilinsky has provided a lengthier discussion of the emergence of art house theaters in the United States; see *Sure Seaters: The Emergence of Art House Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001). For an examination of the postwar period that addresses both art house cinemas and supporting configurations of critical discourses, see Janet Staiger, "With the Compliments of the Auteur: Art Cinema and the Complexities of Its Reading Strategies," in *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of Cinema* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 178–95. For a more focused study of one such institution, see Scott MacDonald, *Cinema 16: Documents toward a History of the Film Society* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002).

14. For overviews of the development of little theaters, see Wilinsky, *Sure Seaters*. Douglas Gomery reports that some foreign-language theaters, particularly in the late 1920s and early 1930s, subsisted on an eclectic program of non-American films that included both what have become art films and what would be considered standard commercial fare assembled to appeal to the widest possible ethnic or non-English-speaking communities. In fact, in 1931 it was thought that foreign-language cinemas would become a regular part of film exhibition in the United States as producers struggled with the problems presented by synchronized sound and multiethnic and multilingual audiences. While most studios ceased active production and distribution of foreign-language films only a few years after the shift to synch sound, a small number of imported foreign-language films could still be seen largely on urban screens throughout the 1930s. Gomery notes that an estimated two hundred theaters regularly presented foreign films, a number that represents approximately 1 percent of American movie theaters. Of these, only half showed foreign films exclusively. On rare occasions major distributors would make available important or successful foreign films such as *The Battleship Potemkin* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1926), *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1919), and *Grand Illusion* (Jean Renoir, 1938), but this remained highly unusual. On the whole, foreign films were a primarily urban and limited phenomenon. Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 174–78. Kristin Thompson, "Dr. Caligari at the Folies-Bergère, or, The Successes of an Early Avant-Garde Film," in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari: Texts, Contexts, Histories*, ed. Mike Budd (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 121–70. For contemporaneous responses to Eisenstein's films, see Herbert Marshall, ed., *The Battleship Potemkin* (New York: Avon Books, 1978). For an overview of European films in the United States, see Anthony Henry Guzman, "The Exhibition and Reception of European Films in the United States during the 1920s" (Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 1993).

15. For recent work on film societies, see Charles Acland, "National Dreams, International Encounters: The Formation of Canadian Film Culture in the 1930s," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 3, no. 1 (1994): 3–26. See Richard Abel, *French Cinema: The First Wave, 1915–1929* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 241–75; Sabine Hake, *Cinema's Third Machine: Writing on Film in Germany 1907–1933* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993); Horak, *Lovers of Cinema*; David Robinson, "The Career and Times of the Film Society" (unpublished manuscript, 1963), Film Society Special Collection, Special Collections, British Film Institute, London; Jen Samson, "The Film Society, 1925–1939," in *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema*, ed. Charles Barr (London: British Film Institute, 1986), 306–13; Jamie Sexton, "The Film Society and the Creation of an Alternative Film Culture in Britain in the 1920s," in *The Young and Innocent? The Cinema in Britain, 1896–1930*, ed. Andrew Higson (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002), 291–305; Ben Davis, "Beginnings of the Film Society Movement in the U.S.," *Film and History* 24, nos. 3–4 (1994): 6–26; Scott Curtis, "The Taste of a Nation: Training the Senses and Sensibility of Cinema Audiences in Imperial Germany," *Film History* 6, no. 4 (1994): 445–69; Raymond Borde, *Les cinémathèques* (Lausanne: Editions L'Age d'Homme, 1983); MacDonald, *Cinema 16*.

16. For histories of these early archives and international archives, see Roger Smither and David Walsh, "Unknown Pioneer: Edward Foxen Cooper and the Imperial War Museum Film Archive, 1919–1934," *Film History* 12, no. 2 (2000): 187–203; Penelope Houston, *Keepers of the Frame: The Film Archives* (London: British Film Institute, 1994); Slide, *Nitrate Won't Wait*; Georges Langlois and Glenn Myrent, *Henri Langlois: First Citizen of Cinema*, trans. Lisa Nesselson (New York: Twayne, 1995).

17. This is particularly true before the standardization of safety stock and the less expensive and more portable 16mm format in 1923. With each technological innovation in exhibition—from 16mm to 8mm to television—"films" have become increasingly domesticated and thus in the most basic material sense easier to integrate into individualized models of engagement.

18. For a general history of urbanization, social struggle, and the middle class, see Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in American, 1820–1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978). For a more specific examination of culture, see Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988). For classic examinations of the role of moving images in these developments, see Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in New York City, 1880–1920* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870–1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Lauren Rabinovitz, *For the Love of Pleasure: Women, Movies, and Culture in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

19. This is a thesis posited by Bennett in several places; among them see “Useful Culture,” *Cultural Studies* 6, no. 3 (1992): 395–408.

20. Diane Waldman, “‘Toward a Harmony of Interests’: Rockefeller, the YMCA and the Company Movie Theater,” *Wide Angle* 8, no. 1 (1986): 41–51; see also Ronald Walter Greene, “Y Movies: Moving Audiences into Public Spheres of Governance,” *Communication and Critical / Cultural Studies* (forthcoming). For work on church film exhibitions, see Vincent Rosini, “Sanctuary Cinema: The Rise and Fall of the Protestant Churches as Film Exhibition Sites, 1910–1930” (Ph.D. diss., Regent University, 1998).

21. Charles Musser with Carol Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures: Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Traveling Exhibition, 1880–1920* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991); Alison Griffiths, *Wondrous Difference: Cinema, Anthropology, and Turn-of-the-Century Visual Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), esp. chap. 6. Also see Dana Polan, “The Emergence of American Film Studies,” in *In the Absence of Films*, ed. Jon Lewis and Eric Smoodin (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, forthcoming).

22. For an excellent discussion of coincident trends in Germany, see Curtis, “Taste of a Nation.”

23. The idea of classical Hollywood cinema as a standardized and regulated mode of entertainment is often taken as a truism in film studies. Scholars as different as Miriam Hansen and David Bordwell both work within and around it. Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991); David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, and Janet Staiger, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985). For variations of the theme of gradual consolidation of cinema as an institution of exhibition, see Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*.

24. For an excellent overview of the tensions and contradictions inherent in the industry’s address to women during this period, see Shelley Stamp, *Movie-Struck Girls: Women and Motion Picture Culture after the Nickelodeon* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000). See also Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001). For a more Gramscian analysis of the period and its production of literary and biblical titles, see William Uricchio and Roberta E. Pearson, *Reframing Culture: The Case of the Vitagraph Quality Films* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993). Sumiko Higashi explores the transformation of the address into one articulated around consumption and morality in *Cecil B. DeMille and American Culture: The Silent Era* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994).

25. Stephen W. Bush, “Educational Catalogues, Part One,” *Moving Picture World* 18 (October 25, 1913): 357. Other sources suggest this was not a wholly unusual supposition. For instance, *Moving Picture World* established a permanent section entitled “Educational Department.” Bush, who was one of the

magazine's most frequent contributors, reiterated: "One of the great missions of the motion picture" was "to substitute the picture for the book, in order that all may profit where before only a few were benefited." Bush, "History on the Screen," *Motion Picture World* 15 (February 22, 1913): 757. Bush also argued that films were superior sites for the presentation of the classics of literature and epic poetry, challenging the prominence of theater. "New Functions of the Motion Picture," *Moving Picture World* 13 (July 6 1912): 21. The writing of Louis Reeves Harrison also reflects these views; see "Both Entertaining and Educational," *Moving Picture World* 13, no. 10 (September 7, 1912): 953; "Over Their Heads," *Moving Picture World* 10, no. 6 (1911): 449; "A Happy and Prosperous New Year for all World Readers," *Moving Picture World* 8 (January 7, 1911): 13. Such discourses continued into the 1920s. See, for example, Carl E. Milliken "Increasing the General Usefulness of Films: Educational Pictures, Religious Pictures, Medical Pictures, and Films in Industry Are Given Encouragement," *Motion Picture* 4, no. 8 (August 1928): 6–7. For more on Bush, Harrison, and Milliken, and for further examples of similar arguments, see Myron Osborn Lounsbury, *The Origins of American Film Criticism, 1909–1939* (New York: Arno Press, 1973). For a further discussion of the industry's efforts to associate itself with institutions of moral repute, see Anne Morey, *Hollywood Outsiders: The Adaptation of the Film Industry, 1913–1934* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), esp. chaps. 4 and 5.

26. As early as 1914, people were advocating for the use of films in libraries. For example, Orrin G. Cocks, secretary of the National Board of Censorship (later to become the National Board of Review), warned the readers of the *Library Journal* that they would have to pay the price for their indifference to the educational potential of film exhibition. Orin G. Cocks, "Libraries and Motion Pictures: An Ignored Educational Agency," *Library Journal* 39 (September 1914): 666–69. See also Melvil Dewey, "Our Next Half Century," *Library Journal* 51, no. 18 (October 15, 1926): 887–89; Lamar Trotti, "Film Preservation," *Library Journal* 54 (1929): 720. In 1916, O. R. Geyer predicted that by 1936 students in Iowa's schools would learn their history through motion pictures alone. He cites the pioneering work of Edgar Harlan, curator of the "world's first" motion picture library of historical films, whose collection consisted of films dealing with Iowan history. Subjects included scenes of daily life, parades, and public officials. See O. R. Geyer, "Motion Pictures in the Schools," *Scientific American* 115 (August 26, 1916): 193. See also Myron Lounsbury, "The Origins of American Film Criticism, 1900–1939" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1966), 14–28.

27. In the absence of films, libraries often arranged book displays and other exhibits related to films in current release. E. G. Avey, "Motion Picture Cooperation in Cincinnati," *Library Journal* 60 (1935): 570; Avey, "Nation-wide Public Library Film Bookmark," *Library Journal* 60 (1935): 26. Additional discussions regarding film and the library suggest that this was, indeed, a small but ongoing dialogue. See Mrs. A. H. Maze, "The Library and the Motion Picture House," *Library Journal* 48 (August 1923): 660–62; Vera Snook, "Motion

Pictures and Library Work," *Public Libraries* 26, no. 9 (1921): 574; M. J. Wrigley, "The Film and Its Relation to the Library: A Neglected Educational Agency," *Library World* 23 (1921): 625–28.

28. For more on the history of AMPAS, see Pierre Norman Sands, *A Historical Study of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (1927–1947)* (New York: Arno Press, 1973). The SMPE was a professional organization for engineers and scientists in the film field that held small exhibits and also trade shows throughout the period. It established a West Coast office in 1929 and thereafter worked more actively to conduct and maintain semipermanent film exhibits.

29. For an excellent overview and discussion of the MPPDA, its Studio Relations Committee, its Production Code Administration Office, and the ensuing relationships between the industry and moral reformers (industry critics), see Lea Jacobs, *Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film, 1928–1942* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), esp. chaps. 2 and 5. See also Richard Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office," in *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930–1939*, ed. Tino Balio (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 38–72. Text from the Production Code is printed in Garth Jowett, *Film: The Democratic Art* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976), 468–72. AMPAS collaborated with Los Angeles area schools and California universities, the University of Southern California in particular, to consider the use of films in public schools. Part of the idea was to find uses for the growing number of defunct silent films in studio vaults. In 1929, a committee was struck and a program assembled from clips extracted from Douglas Fairbanks's *Robin Hood*, complete with a booklet to help guide classroom discussion and lesson planning. Indeed, AMPAS played an active role in shaping the study of film at USC and UCLA. At USC the experiment eventuated the first university degree in cinema studies, in 1932. Sands, *Historical Study of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences*, 115–17, 119–21. For more on this see Polan, "The Emergence of American Film Studies." For more on the history of film technology in other educational institutions such as museums, and the role of the SMPE and AMPAS in particular, see Trope, "Le Cinéma Pour Le Cinéma." See also Alison Trope, "Mysteries of the Celluloid Museum: Showcasing the Art and Artifacts of Cinema" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1999).

30. Concurrently, Hays wrote the introduction to a book entitled *That Marvel—The Movie*. The author of this book, Edward Van Zile, wrote science fiction novels and also worked as a writer for the Republican Party, in which Hays also served under the Harding administration. The extent of their collaboration on this book is unknown. Nevertheless, it is one of the most boldly utopian books on film and film archives I have come across. It makes consistently favorable references to Hays and President Harding, whom Van Zile invokes as prominent men on record testifying to the dominance of visual forms for improving knowledge and understanding (Van Zile, *That Marvel—The Movie*, 120–21). Hays's introduction to the book emphasizes the great poten-



tial of moving pictures to improve the fabric of civic life and the concomitant necessity that the film industry serve as the benevolent broker of this. Such rhetoric should be seen within the mandate of his job to ensure industry dominance worldwide through maintaining healthy public relations, staving off government regulation, and securing favorable trade agreements. See Will H. Hays "Introduction," in Van Zile, *That Marvel—The Movie*, v–vi. For details on the relationship of the industry to other American archives, see Dorothy Arbaugh, "Motion Pictures and the Future Historian," *Journal of the Society of American Archivists* 2, no. 2 (1939): 106; Doug Herrick, "Toward a National Film Collection: Motion Pictures at the Library of Congress," *Film Library Quarterly* 13, nos. 2/3 (1980): 11; Slide, *Nitrate Won't Wait*, esp. chap. 1. For information about the MPPDA, Harvard, and the Fogg, see Joseph P. Kennedy, ed., *The Story of the Films* (Chicago: A. W. Shaw, 1927). For more on the Fogg, Harvard, and film, see Peter Decherney, "Imagining the Archive: Film Collecting in America before MoMA" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2001), chap. 3.

31. The most widely circulated and alarmist of these was Forman's *Our Movie Made Children* (New York: Macmillan, 1933). For more on the Payne Fund Studies, see Garth S. Jowett, Ian C. Jarvie, and Kathryn H. Fuller, eds., *Children and the Movies: Media Influence and the Payne Fund Controversy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Mark Anderson, "Taking Liberties: The Payne Fund Studies and the Creation of the Media Expert," in *Inventing Film Studies: Toward a Genealogy of a Discipline*, ed. Lee Grieveson and Haidee Wasson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, forthcoming); Jacobs, *Wages of Sin*; and Richard Maltby, *Harmless Entertainment: Hollywood and the Ideology of Consensus* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1983).

32. Maltby, *Harmless Entertainment*, 63. See also Balio, *Grand Design*, 311.

33. For more on the importance of the child audience and American schools, see Eric Smoodin, "'The Moral Part of the Story Was Great': Frank Capra and Film Education in the 1930s," *Velvet Light Trap* 42 (Fall 1998): 20–35; Richard deCordova, "Ethnography and Exhibition: The Child Audience, the Hays Office and Saturday Matinees," *Camera Obscura* 23 (May 1990): 91–107; Lea Jacobs, "Reformers and Spectators: The Film Education Movement in the 30s," *Camera Obscura* 22 (January 1990): 29–49. See also Morey, *Hollywood Outsiders*, esp. chap. 5.

34. Anne Morey has recently explored a similar thesis in her book *Hollywood Outsiders*. She discusses such efforts to shape the culture of film by examining the emergence of screenwriting schools, film production and exhibition by churches, and film appreciation courses. Linking these activities, she argues, is the rhetoric of participation in cinema's institutions, both as a way to remake the industry and as a way to remake the self.

35. This publication ran from 1936 to 1940 and was published by the H. W. Wilson Company of New York.

36. Some of the books published include Rudolf Arnheim, *Film*, trans. L. M. Sieveking and Ian F. D. Morrow, preface by Paul Rotha (London: Faber and Faber, 1933); Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, trans. Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949); Sergei Eisenstein, *The Film Sense*, trans. Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1947); Ramsaye, *A Million and One Nights*; and Paul Rotha's more scholarly *The Film Till Now: A Survey of World Cinema* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1930). Dziga Vertov's writings have been assembled and published as *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, ed. Annette Michelson, trans. Kevin O'Brian (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984).

37. Kenneth MacGowan wrote regularly for *Seven Arts* (first appeared in 1916); Vachel Lindsay wrote occasionally for the *New Republic*; Robert Sherwood published in *Life* and was the most widely read of professional film reviewers during this period. In the 1920s, Clayton Hamilton argued for films produced and exhibited outside of industry control in *Theatre*, as did Ralph Block in *Century*. Alexander Bakshy used the pages of *Theater Arts Monthly* throughout the 1920s, similarly advocating for cinema. For an important contribution to our understanding of minority presses and film criticism, see Anna Everett, *Returning the Gaze: A Genealogy of Black Film Criticism, 1909–1949* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001). For a general overview of mainstream criticism, see Lounsbury, *Origins of American Film Criticism*.

38. For a more thorough overview of writing on film and the American avant-garde during this period, see the bibliography in Horak, *Lovers of Cinema*, 383–95. Many articles from the journal *Close Up* have been reprinted in an excellent volume entitled *Close Up, 1927–1933: Cinema and Modernism*, ed. James Donald, Anne Friedberg, and Laura Marcus (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998). See also the following works by Anthony Slide, who has overseen the publication of film criticism from 1896 to 1950: *Selected Film Criticism, 1896–1911* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1982); *Selected Film Criticism, 1912–1920* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1982); *Selected Film Criticism, 1921–1930* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1982); *Selected Film Criticism, 1931–40* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1982); *Selected Film Criticism, 1941–50* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1982).

39. See, for example, Annette Glick, "That Habit of Criticizing the Motion Picture," *Educational Screen* 8, no. 1 (January 1934): 10.

40. For more on this in the American context, see Richard Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture, 1915–1928* (New York: Scribner's, 1990), esp. 191–92. This claim also holds true for the British context. See Haidee Wasson, "Writing Cinema into Daily Life: Iris Barry and the Emergence of British Film Criticism in the 1920s," in *Young and Innocent? The Cinema in Britain, 1896–1930*, ed. Andrew Higson (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002), 321–37.

41. Miriam Bratu Hansen, "America, Paris, the Alps: Kracauer (and Benjamin) on Cinema and Modernity," in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern*

*Life*, ed. Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 365–66.

42. Joseph Breen had expanded his actions to include withdrawing films already in release, as well as preventing the rerelease of particular films previously deemed acceptable. Standards toward the second half of the decade became even more strictly enforced. Studios were forced to make greater concessions and were given less room to maneuver around potentially controversial topics such as criminal activity, sex, and violence. The resulting films register gradual changes throughout the decade. Jacobs, *Wages of Sin*, 106; Balio, *Grand Design*, 311.

43. For the most sustained account of the board's role in art film cultures, see Mike Budd, "The National Board of Review and the Early Art Cinema in New York: *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* as Affirmative Culture," *Cinema Journal* 26, no. 1 (1986): 3–18. This important article provides a critical framework through which to understand the board's general goals and importance to film culture. Budd characterizes the board as an organization involved in "setting limitations and exerting pressures on the reading strategies of moviegoers," which worked to "foreground certain textual structures and horizons of expectation in one historical conjuncture" (3). It is worth remembering that the board was a national organization with countless local chapters, engaged in a wide range of activities, from film appreciation and film study to community projects and women's cultures. Much work remains to be done here in order to fully unpack the permutations of the board's influence. The vast collection of its papers is held at the New York Public Library, Special Collections.

44. For more on the cultural politics of the gangster film, see Jonathan Munby, *Public Enemies, Public Heroes: Screening the Gangster from "Little Caesar" to "Touch of Evil"* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). See also Lee Grieveson, Peter Stanfield, and Esther Sonnet, eds., *Mob Culture: Essays on the American Gangster Film* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005).

45. See, for instance, the catalogue for the 1936 show: Alfred H. Barr Jr., ed., *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1936), which was reprinted by Arno Press in 1966 and by Harvard University Press in 1986. This catalogue includes a wide range of techniques and media as enlisted by a range of surrealist artists, including paintings, collages, work derived from found objects, ready-mades, films, photography, architecture, and drawings.

46. See, for instance, Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990); Rabinovitz, *For the Love of Pleasure*; Charney and Schwartz, *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*; Peter Kramer, "The Lure of the Big Picture: Film, Television and Hollywood," in *Big Picture / Small Screen: The Relations between Film and Television*, ed. John Hill and Martin McLoone (Luton: University of Luton Press, 1996), 9–46.

47. For a partial and frequently random version of Iris Barry's personal musings on the significance of the Film Library, see her "Autobiographical Notes," Iris Barry Collection, SC-FSC.

48. See Tom Gunning, "An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)credulous Spectator," in *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film*, ed. Linda Williams (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 114–33. For the key text that cemented the enraptured spectator in film studies, see Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16, no. 3 (August 1975): 6–18.

49. The importance of the complementary concepts of attention and distraction has underpinned a considerable number of key works in film studies. The most influential of these is the fundamental shift in work on early cinema, away from a narrative model and toward analyses based on a range of entirely different concepts: spectacle, shock, surprise, and visceral thrill. This work began with Noël Burch, who argued that early cinema was qualitatively different from the conventionalized narrative forms that were dictated by Hollywood. See his *Life to Those Shadows* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990). This thesis was honed by Tom Gunning, as well as by André Gaudrault; see Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectators and the Avant Garde," in *Space Frame Narrative*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser (London: British Film Institute, 1990), 56–62. This is closely related to though not synonymous with work that embraces cinema for its antibourgeois predilections toward kaleidoscopic aesthetics, the surreal, the antirational, the dreamlike, or simply to urban wandering. Much of this work is informed by renewed interest in the writing of Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Kracauer. Particularly influential has been the English publication of Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999). See also Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. and trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995). For one example of the way this writing has been used in the context of film history, see Giuliana Bruno, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and the City Films of Elvira Notari* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); see also Miriam Hansen, "Benjamin, Cinema and Experience: The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology," *New German Critique* 40 (Winter 1987): 179–224. On the other hand, there is also work that has explicitly posed itself against the attractions thesis, arguing that simultaneously there were efforts to capture attention and to reinstall a mode of concentrated or directed viewing. William Uricchio and Roberta Pearson, in *Reframing Culture*, have dubbed industry efforts to market quality film adaptations of biblical and literary works a cinema of "counter attraction," a cinema posed against spectacular entertainment and visceral thrills. A similar argument has been made about the design of modernist movie theaters conceived in the late 1920s that were predicated on eliminating all viewer distractions from the screened moving image, therefore maximizing attention to the screen image itself. For a brief discussion of these

theaters and their design, see Peter Decherney, "Cult of Attention: An Introduction to Seymour Stern and Harry Allan Potamkin (contra Kracauer) on the Ideal Movie Theater," *Spectator* 18, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 1998): 18–25.

50. Meetings of film teachers, hosted by Richard Griffith and Margareta Akermark, began in 1957 and continued in 1958 and 1959. The early participants in these meetings founded the Society of Cinematologists (SoC) in 1959. The name of this association was changed to the Society for Cinema Studies in 1968. For more on the founding of the SoC, see Jack Ellis "The Society of Cinema Studies: A Personal Recollection of the Early Days," *Cinema Journal* 43, no. 1 (Fall 2003): 105–12.

51. Horak suggests that the Little Theater in Rochester, New York, is in fact the oldest art theater. Founded in October 1929, it is still in operation. For more on this, see Horak, *Lovers of Cinema*.

52. Harold Leonard, ed., *The Film Index: A Bibliography*, vol. 1, *The Film as Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art and H. W. Wilson, 1941).

53. The following are among the early books written using Film Library resources: Iris Barry, *D. W. Griffith, American Film Master* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1940); Bosley Crowther, *The Lion's Share: The Story of an Entertainment Empire* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1957); Jay Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian Film* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1960); Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947); Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960); Lewis Jacobs, *Rise of the American Film: A Critical History* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1939); Arthur Knight *The Liveliest Art: A Panoramic History of the Movies* (New York: Macmillan, 1957); Arthur Calder-Marshall, *The Innocent Eye: The Life of Robert J. Flaherty*, based on research material by Paul Rotha and Basil Wright (London: W. H. Allen, 1963); and Kenneth MacGowan, *Behind the Screen: The History and Techniques of the Motion Picture* (New York: Dell, 1965).

54. Many of these articles tend to celebrate MoMA's declaration that film was a legitimate art without full consideration of the many factors that shaped the film library, and that made it possible in the first place. They do, however, provide useful introductions to the history of the department; especially good is Mary Lea Bandy's "Nothing Sacred: 'Jock Whitney Snares Antiques for Museum,'" in *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-century: Continuity and Change*, ed. John Elderfield, *Studies in Modern Art*, vol. 5 (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1995), 74–103; see also Trope, "Le Cinéma Pour Le Cinéma"; Bill Mikulak, "Mickey Meets Mondrian: Cartoons Enter the Museum of Modern Art," *Cinema Journal* 36, no. 3 (Spring 1997): 56–72; Peter Catapano, "Creating 'Reel' Value: The Establishment of MoMA's Film Library, 1935–37," *Film and History* 24, nos. 3–4 (1994): 28–46; Raymond J. Haberski, *It's Only a Movie: Films and Critics in American Culture* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 81–101. For a recent and prominent example of this, see Bordwell, *On the History of Film Style*.

55. David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003).

56. Many early international histories of film tend to enact the idea that the history of films is written as an ever-progressing story of formal achievement and sophistication. In these works, films are not generally placed within history but rather sit outside of it as discrete texts unaffected by a larger sociopolitical context. Historical change becomes linear and unidirectional. See, for example, Georges Sadoul, *Histoire d'un art: Le cinéma des origines à nos jours* (Paris: Flammarion, 1949); David Robinson, *The History of World Cinema* (New York: Stein and Day, 1973); Jacobs, *Rise of the American Film*; Knight, *Liveliest Art*; and Rotha, *Film Till Now*.

57. Ideas about film art diverged dramatically throughout the 1970s, though style tended to remain their primary focus. In a slightly broader understanding of Anglo-American film culture, the term *art cinema* is most commonly used to describe a particular group of postwar European films, exhibited in the United States, which share an identifiable set of formal properties. Movements such as neorealism and the New Wave, and directors such as De Sica, Rossellini, Resnais, Fellini, Antonioni, and Godard, were taken to embody shared formal features, usually including nonlinear narrative structure, psychological complexity, the disunity of time and space, self-conscious explorations of technique and style, and the elevated presence of the director-auteur as an animating and omnipresent source of meaning. Such films were often composed of distinguishing formal as well as thematic elements, including jump cuts and jerky cameras and issues dealing explicitly with sexual topics or politically marginal stances. This was a key assumption and sometimes primary prescriptive of film theory and criticism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, forwarded by the journal *Screen* and by theorists and critics such as Peter Wollen, Colin MacCabe, and Laura Mulvey. See also David Bordwell, "The Art Cinema as Mode of Film Practice," *Film Criticism* 4, no. 1 (Fall 1979): 56–64. For an example of an argument that fashions art cinema as a mode of national cinema contra Hollywood, see Steve Neale, "Art Cinema as Institution," *Screen* 22, no. 1 (1981): 11–39. For a classic formulation of avant-garde cinema as anticommercial and autonomous, see P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde, 1943–2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). In a more materialist approach to film art, Janet Staiger explores the relationship between critics and the resources available to mobilize certain kinds of interpretive strategies within particular historical formations. See "With the Compliments of the Auteur," 178–95. For work that tends to art institutions and exhibition, see Scott MacDonald, "Amos Vogel and Cinema 16," *Wide Angle* 9, no. 3 (1987): 44; and MacDonald, *Cinema 16*. For work that presumes that debates about film art and auteurism are inextricably linked to capitalism, see Mike Budd, "Authorship as Commodity: The Art Cinema and *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*," *Wide Angle* 6 (1984): 12–19. For a discussion of the development of art house cinemas in the 1950s, see Wilinsky, *Sure Seaters*. For work that seeks to muddy the concept of film art by examining the cultural

practices in which it is embroiled, see Joan Hawkins, "Sleaze Mania, Euro-Trash, and High Art: The Place of European Art Films in American Low Culture," *Film Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (Winter 1999): 14–29. Eric Schaefer also discusses the overlap between the use of the term *art film* and films that were deemed morally suspect or racy by Hollywood publicists; see his *Bold! Daring! Shocking! True! A History of Exploitation Films, 1919–1959* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), and "Resisting Refinement: The Exploitation Film and Self-Censorship," *Film History* 6, no. 3 (1994): 293–313.

58. For a fascinating exploration of the formal construction of foreignness in cinema as linguistic rather than properly cinematic, see John Mowitt, *Retakes: Postcoloniality and Foreign Film Languages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

59. Among the more important contributions to this growing body of work, see Musser with Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures*; Gregory Waller, *Main Street Amusements: Movies and Commercial Entertainment in a Southern City, 1896–1930* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995); Kathryn Fuller, *At the Picture Show: Small-Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996); Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby, eds., *American Movie Audiences: From the Turn of the Century to the Early Sound Era* (London: BFI Publishing, 1999). For the standard overview of film exhibition in the United States, which includes movie theaters as well as televisions and VCRs, see Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*. For work that focuses on contemporary discourses of exhibition technologies and their impact on film culture and questions of value, see Barbara Klinger, *Fortress of Solitude: Cinema, New Technologies and the Home* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, forthcoming). For more on the role of particular technologies of exhibition and their place in the shape of film and film culture, see Bruce A. Austin, "Home Video: The Second-Run 'Theater' of the 1990s," in *Hollywood in the Age of Television*, ed. Tino Balio (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 319–49; Eric Schaefer, "Gauging a Revolution: 16mm Film and the Rise of the Pornographic Feature," *Cinema Journal* 41, no. 3 (2002): 3–26; John Belton, *Widescreen Cinema* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992). On the crucial role of exhibition and reception in the histories of film culture that emphasize race and class, see Mary Carbine, "'The Finest Outside the Loop': Motion Picture Exhibition in Chicago's Black Metropolis, 1905–1928," *Camera Obscura* 23 (1990): 8–41; Waldman, "'Toward a Harmony of Interests.'" For a wonderful resource book, see Gregory Waller, ed., *Moviewalking in America: A Sourcebook in the History of Film Exhibition* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002). For recent work on these shifts, see Charles Acland, *Screen Traffic: Movies, Multiplexes, and Global Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

60. I am purposefully paraphrasing Foucault here. See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock, 1972), 49.

61. See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

62. I am deeply indebted here to the work of Raymond Williams, especially *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); “Introduction,” in *Visions and Blueprints: Avant-Garde Culture and Radical Politics in Early Twentieth-Century Europe*, ed. Peter Collier and Edward Timms (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 1–17; and “The Politics of the Avant-Garde,” in *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (New York: Verso, 1989), 49–64.

## CHAPTER 2. MANNERED CINEMA / MOBILE THEATERS

1. An earlier film in this same series was also made about the Film Library and the importance of film archiving, entitled *The Film That Was Lost* (1942). It emphasized more the imperative of saving Hollywood films as emblems of a distinctly American art form. Both films were directed by Sammy Lee.

2. For work on the history of film exhibition and reception, see Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992); Gregory Waller, *Main Street Amusements: Movies and Commercial Entertainment in a Southern City, 1896–1930* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995); Kathryn Fuller, *At the Picture Show: Small-Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996); and Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992). For more recent work, see Charles R. Acland, *Screen Traffic: Movies, Multiplexes and Global Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003). For recent work that explores smaller and more differentiated film markets, see Eric Schaefer, “Gauging a Revolution: 16mm Film and the Rise of the Pornographic Feature,” *Cinema Journal* 41, no. 3 (Spring 2002): 3–26; Barbara Wilinsky, *Sure Seaters: The Emergence of Art House Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); and Eric Smoodin, “‘The Moral Part of the Story Was Great’: Frank Capra and Film Education in the 1930s,” *Velvet Light Trap* 42 (Fall 1998): 20–35.

3. President’s Research Committee on Social Trends, *Recent Social Trends in the United States* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1933), 210–11. It is difficult to determine the reliability of such figures. Yet another 1932 report stated that there were more than 350,000 nontheatrical projectors in the United States, 300,000 of which were 16mm. F. Dean McClusky, *Visual Instruction: Its Values and Its Needs; A Report by Dean McClusky for Will H. Hays, President, Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Inc.* (New York: Mancall, 1932), 63–64. This figure is by far the highest I have found for the period and may be the result of a desire to convince its readers that film education is a



profitable field. This same report estimated a \$70 million value for the sum total of nontheatrical projectors and a likely student audience of millions, supplying a market worth \$12,310,000,000. This report was prepared for Will Hays, then head of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America. According to the report's foreword, the study was requested by Hays himself in May 1931. Clearly in this document, nontheatrical projectors are linked to a booming market—real or imagined. This market is one that spans grade schools and universities. Also of relevance is a reported boom in the building of new auditoriums and classrooms that were wired for electricity. For more information on schools and projectors, see Cline M. Koon, *Motion Pictures in Education in the United States: A Report Compiled for the International Congress of Educational and Instructional Cinematography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934).

4. Richard Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture, 1915–1928* (New York: Scribner's, 1990), 26.

5. Tino Balio, ed., *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930–1939* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 30.

6. Koszarski, *Evening's Entertainment*, 22.

7. Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, 72–82.

8. For more on this, see Anthony Henry Guzman, "The Exhibition and Reception of European Films in the United States during the 1920s" (Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 1993); see also Jan-Christopher Horak, "The First American Film Avant-Garde, 1919–1945," in *Lovers of Cinema: The First American Film Avant-Garde, 1915–1945*, ed. Jan-Christopher Horak (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 14–66.

9. For evidence of this support, see Gilbert Seldes, "The Intellectual Film," *Amateur Movie Makers* 2, no. 3 (1927): 15, 38; see in particular Symon Gould, "The Little Theatre Movement in the Cinema," *National Board of Review Magazine* 1, no. 5 (1926): 4–5; John Hutchins, "L'Enfant Terrible: The Little Cinema Movement," *Theatre Arts Monthly* 13, no. 9 (1929): 69–97; and Mathew Josephson, "The Rise of the Little Cinema" (1926), in *Spellbound in the Darkness: A History of Silent Cinema*, ed. George C. Pratt (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1973), 483–84.

10. For more, see Michael Mindlin Collection, Special Collections, Film Study Center, Department of Film and Media, Museum of Modern Art, New York. For a discussion of the Film Guild Cinema's ultramodern theater, designed by Frederick Kiesler, see Lisa Phillips, "Architect of Endless Innovation," in *Frederick Kiesler*, ed. Lisa Phillips (New York: Whitney Museum of Art, 1989), 13–35. For discussion of contemporaneous writing about perfecting movie theater design, see Peter Decherney, "Cult of Attention: An Introduction to Seymour Stern and Harry Alan Potamkin (contra Kracauer) on the Ideal Movie Theater," *Spectator* 18, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 1998): 18–25. Barbara Wilinsky (*Sure Seaters*, 58) also notes the emergence of upscale suburban theatres that catered to what were termed "discriminating" audiences.

11. See Michael Mindlin, "The Little Cinema Movement," *Theatre Arts* (July 1928), Michael Mindlin Collection, SC-FSC.

12. Roy W. Winton, "Photoplayfare: An Amateur Outlet?" *Movie Makers* 4, no. 12 (1929): 808.

13. Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, 174. For an excellent history on the transition to synchronized sound, see Don Crafton, *The Talkies: American Cinema's Transition to Sound, 1926–1931* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999).

14. Richard Abel, *French Cinema: The First Wave, 1915–1929* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 241–56. See also Christophe Gauthier, *La passion du cinéma: Cinéphiles, ciné-clubs et salles spécialisées à Paris de 1920 à 1929* (Paris: Association française de recherche sur l'histoire du cinéma / École des chartes, 1999).

15. For accounts of various aspects of alternative film culture in the United States and Europe, see Abel, *French Cinema*, 241–75; Richard Abel, ed., *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History / Anthology 1907–1939*, vol. 1, 1907–1929, and vol. 2, 1929–1939 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988); Sabine Hake, *Cinema's Third Machine: Writing on Film in Germany 1907–1933* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993); Horak, *Lovers of Cinema*; Kristin Thompson, "Dr. Caligari at the Folies-Bergere, or, The Successes of an Early Avant-Garde Film," in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari: Texts, Contexts, Histories*, ed. Mike Budd (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 157; and David Robinson, "The Career and Times of the Film Society" (unpublished manuscript, 1963), Film Society Special Collection, Special Collections, British Film Institute, London. See also Jamie Sexton, "The Film Society and the Creation of an Alternative Film Culture in Britain in the 1920s," in *Young and Innocent? The Cinema in Britain, 1896–1930*, ed. Andrew Higson (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002). For more on the history of the U.S. film society movement, see Ben Davis, "Beginnings of the Film Society Movement in the US," *Film and History* 24, nos. 3–4 (1994): 6–25.

16. This was the Cameo in New York. The first cine club was the International Film Arts Guild, was established in New York by Symon Gould. The club worked on a subscription basis and ran Sunday screenings for members. See Davis, "Beginnings of the Film Society Movement," 8–9.

17. "New York Film Society" [pamphlet], 1932, Tom Brandon Collection, SC-FSC. A memo sent out by the film society and republished in the National Board of Review's magazine billed the endeavor as "the first of its kind in the United States, the first 'secular' organization within the honest traditions of the non-profit spectators' film club." "A Film Society," *National Board of Review* 7, no. 7 (September–October 1932): 10. European precedents were explicitly acknowledged in the memo. Films were chosen by vote among the membership. It cost \$1.00 (\$13.42 in 2003 dollars) to join the society, with an additional \$10.00 annual fee. As a point of comparison, the average movie ticket in 1935 was \$.13 (\$1.74 in 2003), which means that an eager movie watcher could see nearly eighty-five movies a year for the same cost as for

joining the Film Society. See Richard Butsch, “Table A.2: Movie Admission, Radio, and Television Set Retail Prices,” in *The Making of American Audiences: From Stage to Television, 1750–1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 300. This is also an excellent source for compiled information about changing movie admissions and other entertainment charges throughout the century.

18. “New York Film Society,” back cover.

19. It seems that Potamkin and MacDonald were in fact asked to leave the Film Society because of their contemptuous interventions at society meetings. Julien Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery* (New York: Putnam, 1977), 152–55.

20. Davis, “Beginnings of the Film Society Movement,” 11.

21. I have been unable to locate evidence that any overt anticensorship actions were ever taken by either group.

22. Some of these film programs are held in the Tom Brandon Collection, SC-FSC.

23. Brandon is quoted in Davis, “Beginnings of the Film Society Movement,” 16. For further recollections that confirm the competition between these two groups for the same, small pool of films, see Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery*, 154.

24. Harry Alan Potamkin, “The Ritual of the Movies” (1933), in *The Compound Cinema: The Film Writings of Harry Alan Potamkin*, ed. Lewis Jacobs (New York: Teachers College Press, 1977), 216–21.

25. Paul Rotha similarly criticizes the flatulent nature of film societies and their engagement with the meaning and significance of film. He claimed that too many audience members “favour vague phrasings of a distinctly ‘arty’ nature, attributing a variety of meanings to films and their directors of which the latter are quite innocent. It is fashionable to talk airily of subject-value and attach too great an importance to irrelevant theories of technique, which not only defeats the aim of societies but brings disfavour upon the works of perfectly competent and simple-minded directors. Too few of these enthusiastic amateurs penetrate to the heart and meaning of cinema; they are happy to bandy slick phrases one with another and avoid the real significance of the film medium” (188). He goes on to call this “effeminate dilettantism.” Rotha, “Repertory Film Movement” (1931), in *A Paul Rotha Reader*, ed. Duncan Petrie and Robert Kruger (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), 187–90.

26. For instance, Dwight MacDonald continued an active career crafting polemical film criticism. Lincoln Kirstein had founded the well-known little magazine *Hound and Horn*, which published many articles on the cinema, written by himself as well as by Harry Alan Potamkin, Jere Abbot, Alfred Barr Jr., and Russel T. Hitchcock. Many of the articles have been republished in George Amberg, ed., *Hound and Horn: Essays on Cinema* (New York: Arno Press, 1972). Years later, Kirstein went on to help found the short-lived journal *Films* (1939–40) with Jay Leyda and others. Harry Alan Potamkin was a prolific writer on film and an active member of the Workers Film and Photo League, and, of course, Iris Barry went on to curate at MoMA’s Film Library.

27. Gideon Bachman, "Film Societies in the USA," *Film Culture* 1, no. 2 (March–April 1955): 48–49; Jack Ellis, "Film Societies Federate," *Film Culture* 1, no. 3 (May–June 1955): 30–31; and Russel Lynes, *The Lively Audience: A Social History of the Visual Performing Arts in America, 1890–1950* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), 380.

28. For more on this circuit, see Anthony Slide, *Before Video: A History of the Non-theatrical Film* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992). Slide also identifies other distributors, many of whom were based in Chicago, along with widely distributed educational magazines addressing a range of visual technologies: *Educational Screen* (beginning in 1922), *Visual Education* (1920), and *Business Screen* (1938). For one example of a history addressing an earlier period of itinerant projection and traveling exhibition, see Charles Musser with Carol Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures: Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Traveling Exhibition, 1880–1920* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

29. Ben Singer, "Early Home Cinema and the Edison Home Projecting Kinetoscope," *Film History* 2, no. 1 (1988): 37. Many of these early systems were self-contained units that recorded, printed, and projected films on the same piece of equipment. See Glenn E. Matthews and Raiffe G. Tarkington, "Early History of Amateur Motion-Picture Film" (1955), in *A Technological History of Motion Pictures and Television: An Anthology from the Pages of the Journal of the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers*, ed. Raymond Fielding (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 130–31.

30. Eastman Kodak was no stranger to industry collusion. Only fifteen years earlier it sought to increase its advantage by entering into an agreement with the Motion Picture Patents Company—a company formed by the primary American production interests in 1908. This deal ensured that the "trust" would use only Eastman's stock if it was sold only to those who were members of the trust, attempting to squeeze out independent producers. For more on this, see Eileen Bowser, *Transformation of the Cinema, 1907–1915* (New York: Scribner, 1990), 21–36.

31. By May 1927 the limits of the reversal stock were clear, and Du Pont announced a 16mm safety film from which a negative could be struck, thereby easily allowing for striking multiple copies. "Dupont Reversal Stock" [advertisement], *Amateur Movie Makers* 2, no. 5 (1927): 31. The new stock was marketed not only by foregrounding the ability to make many inexpensive copies but by highlighting the freedom this gave for repeat projections in perpetuity. By preserving the negative and projecting the positive, "those vital, living, treasured records" would "become a record for all time." "Dupont 'Multiple Copies'" [advertisement], *Amateur Movie Makers* 2, no. 10 (1927): 34.

32. Although according to one issue of *Cinema Quarterly*, a plan did exist in the United States for establishing 16mm theatrical screenings in professional film theaters that had been closed. The plan called for portable projectors

with a complete program consisting of features, cartoons, and travelogues. "Newsreel," *Cinema Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (1933): 65.

33. Patricia Zimmerman, *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 28.

34. *Ibid.*, 30.

35. Victor Animatograph issued the Victor Ciné-Camera Model 1 and the Victor Ciné-Projector. Bell and Howell announced the Filmo 70-A camera and 57-A projector.

36. Included among these was Pathé, which, while continuing to offer its 28mm and 9.5 mm services, had to concede the appeal and power of the new gauge. Pathé entered into an agreement with DuPont and DeVry, offering the same titles it circulated in 28mm and 9.5mm, reduced on Dupont stock for DeVry 16mm projectors. "DuPont-Devry-Pathé" [advertisement], *Amateur Movie Makers* 2, no. 2 (1927): 10.

37. By examining Eastman Kodak's patents during the period 1923–59, Zimmerman (*Reel Families*, 59) confirms that Kodak was less concerned with filmmaking than with the manufacture of film stock. Its nonchemical patents indicate a large percentage of them were for equipment to manufacture celluloid.

38. Brian Winston, *Media Technology and Society: A History: From the Telegraph to the Internet* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 37, 58–60; Zimmerman, *Reel Families*, 1–18.

39. For example, in 1928 the Kodascope Projector cost \$300 (the equivalent of about \$3,224 in 2003). Two years later, after the stock market crash, that year's model was priced at the same nominal rate of \$300, but because of inflation linked to the Depression, this same \$300 actually indicates a 20 percent decrease (about \$2,579 in 2003). The marketing of sound projectors raised the entry-level price for nontheatrical exhibition. In 1935, for instance, Victor introduced a sound-on-film projector priced at \$395 (about \$5,299 in 2003).

40. One example of attempts to overcome these costs, exacerbated by the Depression, is the National Film Library, founded by the Leavitt Cinema Picture Company in 1931. Guido Rossi, an associate of the company, wrote that it set out to offer "wholesome instructive programs of 16mm films paid for entirely by a select group of advertisers instead of the National Film Library Members" (656). Rossi stated that the inspiration for this scheme was gleaned from the example of radio's sponsored programs. The company's library reportedly contained films on natural science, history, the "geography of races and peoples," travelogues, and industrials. Sponsors' names were placed before and after the films. See Guido Rossi, "Publicity in the Service of Cinematography: The 'National Film Library' of America," *International Review of Educational Cinematography* 5, no. 10 (1933): 656–60. See also "Library Progress," *Movie Makers* 4, no. 3 (1929): 194.

41. Examples of "film swaps" or exchange boards can be seen regularly in the journal of the Amateur Cinema League, *Movie Makers*.

42. Roy Winton, "Cranking Your Own," *National Board of Review Magazine* 2, no. 6 (1927): 3.

43. Philip Sterling, "Sowing the 16mm Field," *New York Times*, July 25, 1937, 133. Importantly, these figures are rough and likely inflate the actual amount of activity. It is also unlikely that they wholly account for the range of 16mm production and exhibition activity taking place in other locations. The emphasis on "home moviemaking" does not suggest inclusion of the professional filmmaking that sought to service the 16mm exhibition market, evident in the film libraries discussed on the following pages.

44. *Ibid.* Note that the 1937 price of \$1.00 per reel would equal approximately \$12.76 in 2003 dollars.

45. For more on this, see David Pierce, "Silent Movies and the Kodescope Libraries," *American Cinematographer* 70, no. 1 (January 1989): 36–40.

46. By the 1930s, at least twenty-five major nontheatrical rental companies were based in Chicago alone (Slide, *Before Video*, 25). Between 1949 and 1951, the number of nontheatrical film libraries increased from 897 to 2,002, with more than two-thirds handling educational films and one-third handling religious productions (Slide, *Before Video*, 107).

47. Vachel Lindsay, *The Art of the Moving Picture* (1915; New York: Livright, 1970), 253–54.

48. Singer, "Early Home Cinema," 51–53, 54. Ben Singer has traced discussions of films in classrooms back to 1907, in magazines such as *Show World* and *Moving Picture World*. He also maps the marked increase of these discussions from 1911 onward.

49. "Edison Urges Educational Use of Motion Pictures, Says Government Should Start Film Library and Distribute Films to Schools," *School Life* 1 (February 1919): 2.

50. "Ciné Education for Educators," *Amateur Movie Makers* 11, no. 5 (May 1927): 11, 41.

51. Slide, *Before Video*, 40. See also "A Climactic Development in Education: Million Dollar Organization Formed by Eastman Kodak to Further Educational Films," *Movie Makers* 3, no. 6 (1928): 380; see also Thomas Edward Finegan, "A Library of Two Hundred Teaching Films," *National Board of Review Magazine* 7, no. 8 (November 1932): 5–7.

52. Slide, *Before Video*, 40–41. Eastman Classroom Films were in full production until 1932, when they were subsumed by Eastman Teaching Films, Inc.

53. Pathé Exchange, Inc., *Pathé Educational Films (16mm)* (New York: Pathé Exchange, 1929); see also Associated Film Libraries of Chicago, "A Circulating 16mm Film Library," *Educational Screen* 12, no. 6 (June 1933): 179. This library also funded the circulation of its educational and entertainment titles by attaching advertising to the films, as well as charging a membership fee. Further, the field of medical films was particularly well developed. Kodak had established a Medical Film Library by the early 1930s. This international repository of medical films for sale or rent in the United States and the United

Kingdom had captured the attention of the international educational film community. See Adolf Nichtenhauser, "For the Creation of an International Film Archive," *International Review of Educational Cinematography* 6, no. 4 (1934): 248–51.

54. Carl E. Milliken, "A Motion Picture Library for the Future," *Special Libraries* 17, no. 8 (1926): 318.

55. Slide, *Before Video*, 95. The MPPDA had various committees in which educators participated and advised on the generally accepted value of circulating Hollywood films in schools. Another such committee was established in 1937 which resulted in the foundation of Teaching Film Custodians, an organization designed precisely to distribute reduced or highly edited industry films to schools (Slide, *Before Video*, 96).

56. *Ibid.*, 101.

57. See Roger Albright, "Education from the Theatrical Screen," in *Film and Education: A Symposium on the Role of the Film in the Field of Education*, ed. Godfrey Elliot (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948), 407–21.

58. This number represents Hays's estimate of the number of schools that would theoretically be interested in showing films (Sterling, "Sowing the 16mm Field," 3). Interestingly, this announcement was made with the qualification that the films would be shot in 35mm and reduced to 16mm later. This not only supports Zimmerman's claims that there was a resistance to the "amateur" look of 16mm gauge but also supports the implicit aesthetic discrimination of many of the documentarians and newsreel makers, some of whom advocated for 16mm as a mode of exhibition but not production. Brian Winston has also discussed this at greater length. Winston, "The Case of 16mm Film," in *Technologies of Seeing: Photography, Cinematography, Television* (London: British Film Institute, 1996), 63–69.

59. In 1950 the educational distribution company Teaching Film Custodians, established in 1938 at the behest of the MPPDA, began circulating a series of films, each produced by a different studio, on the history and workings of motion picture productions. The series, entitled *The Movies and You*, was framed in the familiar tone of inviting students to be part of the secrets and inner workings of the industry. The films were available on 16mm and marketed to schools. For more on Hollywood films and classrooms, see Smoodin, "'The Moral Part of the Story Was Great,'" 20–35; Lea Jacobs "Reformers and Spectators: The Film Education Movement in the 30s," *Camera Obscura* 22 (January 1990): 28–49; Anne Morey, *Hollywood Outsiders: The Adaptation of the Film Industry, 1913–1934* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 148–99.

60. Production of educational films largely came from outside of Hollywood, from manufacturers of equipment, state and federal offices, colleges and universities, educational groups, and industrial organizations. Yale was a particularly active producer and distributor, developing films based on its fifty-volume book series *The Chronicles of America*. The films were dramatizations of noteworthy events in American history, produced between 1923 and 1925,

circulating nationally in schools, museums, and other locations. Another example of these educational efforts was the University Film Foundation, established at Harvard in 1928. The foundation set out to orchestrate the production, distribution, and loan of films to educational and cultural institutions. Its goal was to create a central repository for films of educational and scientific value from all over the world. For more, see “The New University Film Foundation: A Center for Producing Educational Films Is Established at Harvard,” *Amateur Movie Makers* 3, no. 5 (1928): 336.

61. The formation of the Association of School Film Libraries was a result of ongoing interest in film distribution to schools. The association was designed primarily as a clearinghouse, and as a site for national coordination of information and evaluations of films to help schools and other educational and nonprofit organizations. This grew out of a 1937 conference on noncommercial distribution of educational films. One of its most noteworthy results was to make 16mm prints of Henry Luce’s newsreel *March of Time* available to schools.

62. McClusky, *Visual Instruction*, 63. Films were used at universities for a wide range of activities, including promotion, sports training programs, drama programs, foreign languages, science, and medicine.

63. For an excellent discussion of these developments, especially as they relate to film in universities, see Peter Decherney, “Inventing Film Study and Its Object at Columbia University, 1915–1938,” *Film History* 12 (2000): 443–60.

64. For more on this, see Dana Polan, “The Emergence of American Film Studies,” in *In the Absence of Films*, ed. Jon Lewis and Eric Smoodin (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, forthcoming). See also Dana Polan, “Young Art, Old Colleges: Early Episodes in the American Study of Film,” in *Inventing Film Studies: Towards a Genealogy of a Discipline*, ed. Lee Grieveson and Haidee Wasson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, forthcoming). Polan also notes that much of this literature, including the screenwriting guides, committed attention to the idea of creating new public formations around cinema that integrated films into matters of general discussion, as well as practices of discrimination and opinion formation. The following books were published contemporaneous to these shifts: Lindsay, *Art of the Moving Picture*; Victor Freeburg, *Art of Photoplay Making* (New York: Macmillan, 1918); Frances Patterson, *Cinema Craftsmanship* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1921); Rudolph Arnheim, *Film*, trans. L. M. Sieveking and Ian F. D. Morrow, preface by Paul Rotha (London: Faber and Faber, 1933); and Edward S. Van Zile, *That Marvel the Movies: A Glance at Its Reckless Past, Its Promising Present, and Its Significant Future* (New York: Putnam, 1923).

65. Such courses were evident before MoMA but became significantly more standardized with the availability of its circulating film programs. For further discussion of these programs, see chapter 5.

66. In 1927, Will Hays and the president of Columbia University, Nicholas Murray Butler, commissioned a committee to explore the feasibility of a “Motion Picture School of Technology” to assist in training for those either already



in the industry or those hoping to gain employment in the industry. Studio heads were consulted as the plan developed in order to better serve their interests. The program resembled a production-oriented training school. The committee was headed by Carl E. Milliken (MPPDA) and James C. Egbert (Columbia). See “Proposal for Establishment of a Motion Picture School of Technology,” 1927: Colleges: Columbia (Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America Archive, Motion Picture Association of America, New York) (hereinafter cited as MPPDA Archive). I am grateful to Richard Maltby for supplying me with copies of relevant MPPDA documents.

67. For contemporaneous discussion of such courses, see “New York University Plans Film Course,” *Educational Screen* 13, no. 2 (February 1934): 54.

68. See Harry Alan Potamkin, “A Proposal for a School of the Motion Picture Art” (1932), in *The Compound Cinema: The Film Writings of Harry Alan Potamkin*, ed. Lewis Jacobs (New York: Teachers College Press, 1977), 587–92.

69. Frederic Thrasher, “The Motion Picture: Its Artistic, Educational and Social Aspects” [syllabus], New York University, 1934–35. This document was supplied to me thanks to the good graces of Dana Polan.

70. Featured speakers included Martin Quigley (one of the key authors of the Production Code and publisher of *Motion Picture Herald*), Iris Barry, Terry Ramseye, Jean Benoit Levy, Julien Levy, and Roy Winton, head of the Amateur Cinema League.

71. Such programs were planned as part of the educational mandate of AMPAS but also because such films were unavailable elsewhere. Screenings were held irregularly throughout the period. AMPAS even used the Amateur Cinema League and later MoMA as occasional suppliers of films. See Pierre Norman Sands, *A Historical Study of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, 1927–1947* (New York: Arno Press, 1973) 142–44.

72. *Ibid.*, 112.

73. *Ibid.*, 100–114.

74. AMPAS performed general publicity functions for the industry. Early on it also facilitated the prescreening of films (in coordination with the MPPDA), using its projection facilities for groups such as the American Library Association, the International Federation of Catholic Alumnae, the Federal Council of Churches, the American Association of University Women, the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, and the Daughters of the American Revolution. Five representatives from each organization were invited to watch new films not yet publicly exhibited, upon which reports would be written and distributed through the memberships *Ibid.*, 120–22, 163.

75. Smoodin, “Frank Capra and Film Education in the 1930s”; Jacobs, “Reformers and Spectators.” The Payne Fund Studies (PFS) resulted in twelve published volumes dedicated to the question of movies and youth. Even though collectively the studies reported a range of findings, the most well-known of these volumes at the time was *Our Movie Made Children* (1933), by Henry James Forman. It was a popularized version and a very particular in-

terpretation of the studies, which contained the most sustained and fear-mongering attacks on the industry, mostly by arguing that children learned—by imitation—dangerous behaviors from the movies. Hollywood films, so it was claimed, inspired delinquency in boys, promiscuity in girls, and an unsettling desire for unobtainable wealth in both. The studies and usually Forman’s version of them were discussed extensively in the popular press. Importantly, the studies represent the collaboration of reform groups that objected as often to film content as to Hollywood’s oligopoly. They borrowed the power of the social sciences to fortify their case. For more on the PFS, see also Garth Jowett, “Social Science as a Weapon: The Origins of the Payne Fund Studies, 1926–1929,” *Communication* 13, no. 3 (1992): 211–25.

76. Don Carlos Ellis and Laura Thornborough, *Motion Pictures in Education: A Practical Handbook for Users of Visual Aids* (New York: Thomas Y Crowell, 1923); Frank N. Freeman, ed., *Visual Education: A Comparative Study of Motion Pictures and Other Methods of Instruction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1924); Jackson Wrigley, *The Film: Its Use in Popular Education* (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1922); Frank N. Freeman with Ben D. Wood, *Motion Pictures in the Classroom: An Experiment to Measure the Value of Motion Pictures as Supplementary Aids in Regular Classroom Instruction* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1929). For more, see Slide, *Before Video*, 59–74.

77. See William Lewin, *Photoplay Appreciation in American High Schools* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1934).

78. *Visual Education*, a magazine published by the Society for Visual Education, was subsumed by *Educational Screen* in 1925. *International Review of Educational Cinematography*, which was issued in English, French, Italian, German, and Spanish, was published by the International Educational Cinematographic Institute, a group affiliated with the League of Nations and based in Rome.

79. As a further indication of the spread of 16mm projectors, Anthony Slide (*Before Video*, 67) has indicated that by 1950 there were 20,471 such projectors in high schools. The spread of film rental agencies and educational film producers provides additional evidence of this growth. During the same period, Koon estimated that thirty-two of forty-eight states had film libraries under the supervision of educational directors. Perhaps one of the most important and influential organizations of this sort was the YMCA, which had been showing films since 1907 and had established a library of films in 1911. Its Motion Picture Bureau was established by 1914. Records for 1939 indicate that in that year 127,000 reels of film were shipped from the bureau’s offices in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco, to be viewed by twenty-six million people. This figure would make the YMCA the largest nontheatrical distributor in the country, almost doubling the estimated audience of the American Museum of Natural History (see note 82). The subjects were varied, but one thing they had in common was that no liquor was seen in even one frame of film. A majority of these films were on 16mm (Slide, *Before Video*, 69). See also Ronald Walter

Greene, "Y Movies: Moving Audiences into Public Spheres of Governance," *Communication and Critical / Cultural Studies* (forthcoming).

80. Frederic Andrews, "Modern Trends in the Visual Programs," *Educational Screen* 13, no. 3 (March 1934): 65.

81. Ward C. Bowen, *The Use of the Motion Picture in Education* (Albany, NY: Bureau of Radio and Visual Aids, State Education Department, 1936), quoted in Elizabeth Laine, *Motion Pictures and Radio: Modern Techniques for Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1938), 46.

82. The American Museum of Natural History confirms the undeniable shift from 35mm to 16mm film. Internal documents indicated that by 1937, 16mm circulation outpaced 35mm circulation by a ratio of more than 10:1. The annual report for that same year indicates that 33,923 of the museum's 16mm reels circulated, compared with 2,225 of its 35mm reels. There were 1,714 borrowers located in forty-five states. This amounted to a total of 82,941 showings and an audience of 13,401,512. American Museum of Natural History, *Annual Report to the Trustees* (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1937). For more on the relationship of 16mm to 35mm, see Laine, *Motion Pictures and Radio*, and Koon, *Motion Pictures in Education*.

83. Elizabeth Watson Pollard, *Motion Picture Study Groups: Handbook for the Discussion Leader* (Columbus: Bureau of Educational Research, Ohio State University, 1934); Lewin, *Photoplay Appreciation in American High Schools*; Sarah McLean Mullen, *How to Judge Motion Pictures: A Pamphlet for High School Students* (New York: Scholastic, 1935); Richard Lewis and Helen Miller, *Film and School: A Handbook in Moving-Picture Evaluation* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1937); Barret C. Kiesling, *Talking Pictures: How They Are Made, How to Appreciate Them* (Richmond, VA: Johnson, 1937); Edgar Dale, *How to Appreciate Motion Pictures: A Manual of Motion Picture Criticism Prepared for High-School Students* (New York: Macmillan, 1933).

84. This report is cited in Garth Jowett, *Film: The Democratic Art* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976), 274. Supporting this, Cline M. Koon reported that the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) had sent seventeen thousand motion picture study guides to English teachers in 1934 (Koon, *Motion Pictures in Education*, 6). Richard Maltby reports that these study guides were published in the range of several hundreds of thousands. Richard Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office," in *Grand Design: Hollywood as Modern Business Enterprise, 1930–39*, ed. Tino Balio (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 63. And, as Eric Smoodin notes, this would hardly begin to account for sections of courses or even single classes in which films would have been part of various lessons in a range of curricular offerings. See Smoodin, "The Moral Part of the Story Was Great," 22.

85. Jacobs, "Reformers and Spectators." It is, however, important to note that Hollywood films were used in classrooms for a striking range of purposes. Some were used in English classes to encourage discussion of canonical literature, thus having less to do with the appreciation of films and more to do with extending the appreciation of books. Predictably, in such classes, the exhibition

of literary adaptations was dominant. Yet films were also used in classes such as geography, where students were encouraged to watch films in order to make maps or compose topographic sketches.

86. One prominent example of such a program was a group of films entitled *The Human Relations Series*. The Rockefeller-funded General Education Board provided a grant to the Progressive Education Association (PEA) to research the efficacy of excerpted Hollywood films for classroom use as case studies on human relations. Such films were given freely by Hollywood, facilitated by the MPPDA, and had been circulating since 1935 as *The Secrets of Success*, prepared and distributed by Teaching Film Custodians (TFC). This organization had direct backing from the MPPDA, and from 1936 onward the retitled *Human Relations Series* was expanded under the auspices of the PEA (Laine, *Motion Pictures and Radio*, 21). For a contemporaneous description, see Alice V. Kelliher, "Films and Human Relations," *Scholastic* 35, no. 7 (October 30, 1939): n.p.

87. See, for instance, Pollard, *Motion Picture Study Groups*, designed for film study groups made up of parents. It contains basic how-to advice on everything from where to hold a meeting, how to lead discussion, where to find film literature, and so on. In Pollard's book, the literature generated by the Payne Fund was frequently recommended.

88. Smoodin, "The Moral Part of the Story Was Great."

89. John Grierson, "Summary and Survey: 1935," in *Grierson on Documentary*, ed. Forsyth Hardy (New York: Praeger, 1971), 169–86.

90. "Comment and Review," *Close Up* 1 (July 1927): 51–52. Many others have specifically identified 16mm as crucial to developing film as an art. See, for instance, Maya Deren "The Creative Use of Reality" (1960), in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, ed. Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen, and Leo Braudy, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 59–70.

91. For more on this, see James Donald and Anne Friedberg, "Cinema Culture: Introduction," in *Close Up 1927–1933: Cinema and Modernism*, ed. James Donald, Anne Friedberg, and Laura Marcus (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 270–73. Key articles from the journal that address the development of cine clubs, co-op theaters, and amateur groups are reprinted in this same volume. For a suggestive discussion of the "little projector" and the feminist substrains of *Close Up*, see Anne Friedberg, "On H.D., Woman, History, Recognition," *Wide Angle* 5, no. 2 (1982): 26–31.

92. Norman Wilson, "The Sub-standard Film," *Cinema Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (1933): 2–3. Only a few years later, *World Film News*, which absorbed *Cinema Quarterly*, similarly declared: "The substandard libraries are going to be the repertory supply of the future." See "Wealth of the Home Libraries," *World Film News and Television Progress* 1, no. 5 (1936): 33.

93. Sixteen millimeter was particularly important in Great Britain as 16mm was not initially covered by its censorship provisions, which fell under a "public protection" clause, initially designed to protect people from nitrate fires. As such, images that had been censored by government and county coun-

cils could gain entry on 16mm nonflammable film. Many Soviet films entered the country this way. For example, see “Russian Classics on 16mm,” *Cinema Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (1934): 262.

94. See “Reviews of Sub-standard Films,” *Cinema Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (1932): 58.

95. Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery*, 148. For more on Levy’s plans to “display artistic films on request,” see Lincoln Kirstein, “Experimental Films,” *Arts Weekly* 25 (March 1932): 52.

96. Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery*, 48.

97. Reprinted as Harry Alan Potamkin, “A Movie Call to Action!” in *The Compound Cinema: The Film Writings of Harry Alan Potamkin*, ed. Lewis Jacobs (New York: Teachers College Press, 1977), 583–86.

98. *Ibid.*, 585.

99. Russell Campbell, “Radical Cinema in the 1930s: The Film and Photo League,” in *Jump Cut: Hollywood, Politics and Counter-Cinema*, ed. Peter Steven (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1985), 127. For more on this, see William Alexander, *Film on the Left: American Documentary Film from 1931–1942* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 36–40. See Charles Wolfe, “The Poetics and Politics of Nonfiction: Documentary Film,” in *Grand Design: Hollywood as Modern Business Enterprise, 1930–1939*, ed. Tino Balio (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 351–86.

100. The screening notices are available in the Tom Brandon Collection held in the Film Study Center at MoMA. For the most part they do not specify which gauge was used. One flyer explicitly announces the use of a 16mm projector for a screening held at the New School for Social Research in the early 1930s. Judging also from the film course offerings of the New School, which either do not specify gauge or specify 16mm, I have assumed that 16mm was in the least a regular part of film screenings held at the school. Unfortunately, few records are available of these screenings. Course offerings are available on microfilm at the school’s library.

101. Campbell, “Radical Cinema in the 1930s,” 131. See also David Platt, “The Movie Front: National Film Conference,” *New Theatre*, November 1934, 30. The disagreement about setting these standards may have been a fundamental one about how best to further the goals of the league. Sixteen millimeter was a clearly less expensive option for showing films outside of movie theaters, but official policy suggests that not all members wholly embraced it as a desirable tool of production, deeming it inferior to 35mm. In the same issue of *New Theater*, contra this official platform, 16mm was touted as a viable and productive means for cinematic expression and documentation. Ralph Steiner and Irving Lerner provided tips on how to use 16mm to effect 35mm style and quality, offering advice to beginners on how to select film stock, adjust exposure, and choose filters. See “Technical Advice to Movie Makers,” *New Theatre*, November 1934, 27. I thank Charles Wolfe for his keen comments on this issue and for encouraging me to revisit this material.

102. Alexander describes league members traveling the country with 16mm projectors in tow. For more on the league's exhibition practices, which also included some silent 35mm projection, see Alexander, *Film on the Left*, 37–41.

103. Brandon later acknowledged that the development of this network was only mildly successful early on. Yet its spread was immanent, as Brandon himself went on to head Brandon Films, the largest 16mm distribution center from the late 1940s onward. See Tom Brandon, "Pioneers: An Interview with Tom Brandon," interview by Fred Sweet, Eugene Rostow, and Allan Francovich, *Film Quarterly* 27 (Fall 1973).

104. Quoted in Horak, "First American Film Avant-Garde," 2.

105. Horak, "First American Film Avant-Garde," 25.

106. Hiram Maxim Percy, "Hartford Amateur Movie Club," *Movie Makers* 5, no. 3 (1930): 1–2.

107. For more on the early American avant-garde and its relationship to technological shifts and amateur film, see Horak, *Lovers of Cinema*.

108. Percy, "Hartford Amateur Movie Club," 2.

109. Harry Alan Potamkin, "The Close Up's the Thing," *Movie Makers* 4, no. 9 (1929): 572, 597–98; Potamkin, "The Magic of the Machine Films," *Movie Makers* 4, no. 11 (1929): 722–23, 744. See also Seldes, "Intellectual Film," 15, 38.

110. This theater was designed to exhibit educational films, records of daily urban life, gardening films, and amateur movies. Films were intended to be scheduled according to audience interest as it changed throughout the day. The plan exclaimed: "We have civic music, a civic repertory theatre and a town hall for civic lectures, but where is the civic picture house?" Elizabeth Perkins, "The Civic Cinema: A Unique Movie Move Planned for Manhattan," *Amateur Movie Makers* 3, no. 4 (1928): 254. See also Roy Winton, "Photoplayfare: Reviews for the Cinetelligenza," *Movie Makers* 4, no. 12 (1929): 806, 818; and Marguerite Tazelaar, "The Story of the First Little Film Theatre," *Amateur Movie Makers* 3, no. 7 (1928): 441.

111. Eric Schaefer is one notable exception to this. See "Gauging a Revolution," his fascinating article on 16mm and its relationship to the emergence of the exploitation genre. The most lengthy contribution to understanding and research on the 16mm gauge can be found in Patricia Zimmerman's book *Reel Families*. Zimmerman has demonstrated that 16mm technology was discursively aligned with amateur rather than professional production by popular, industrial, and amateur literature. This literature, she concludes, prescribed a particular set of aesthetic strategies to be practiced in private, domestic settings, ghettoizing amateur production, making it by definition subordinate to its professional Hollywood counterpart. Sixteen-millimeter as amateur production was intended to spur film consumption and the market for celluloid and related equipment generally without infringing upon the oligopolistic imbalance of the professional film industry. Brian Winston has also discussed the clear sepa-

ration of amateur and professional production, though he concentrates primarily on the British context; see “The Case of 16mm Film,” in *Technologies of Seeing*, esp. 63–70.

112. This is discussed at length in chapter 5. For fuller explorations of the industry’s early relationship to film study in universities, see Dana Polan, “The Emergence of American Film Studies,” in *The Absence of Films*, ed. Jon Lewis and Eric Smoodin (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, forthcoming); Polan, “Young Art, Old Colleges”; and Decherney, “Inventing Film Study,” 443–60.

### CHAPTER 3. THE MASS MUSEOLOGY OF THE MODERN

1. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, “Roosevelt’s Address on the Museum of Modern Art,” CBS, May 10, 1939, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York, Monroe Wheeler Papers. Also participating in the museum’s nationally broadcast opening were Nelson Rockefeller, Edsel Ford, John Hay Whitney, Walt Disney, and others. For a script of the show, see *Program to Celebrate the Opening of the Museum of Modern Art* (May 10, 1939), MoMA Archives, Alfred H. Barr Jr. Papers (Archives of American Art: 3260; 869–95).

2. The “living museum” is closely related to an idea of public or civic utility. It is evident in the language of the constitution founding the first professional association of museum workers, the American Association of Museums (1906), and throughout the history of American museums. For an excellent early history of American museums, see Karin Elizabeth Rawlins, “The Educational Metamorphosis of the American Art Museum” (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1981), esp. chap. 2.

3. Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff, “Introduction: Frameworks for Critical Analysis,” in *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*, ed. Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), ix–xx.

4. Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Carol Duncan, “The Modern Art Museum: It’s a Man’s World,” in *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 102–32; Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum’s Ruins* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993).

5. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and Their Public* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990).

6. Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998); Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals*; and Christopher Phillips, “The Judgement Seat of Photography,” in *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, ed. Richard Bolton (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 15–46.

7. See, for instance, Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

8. There are some exceptions to this claim. See, for instance, Lianne McTavish, "Shopping in the Museum? Consumer Spaces and the Redefinition of the Louvre," *Cultural Studies* 12, no. 2 (1998): 168–92; and Nancy Shaw, "Modern Art, Media Pedagogy and Cultural Citizenship: The Museum of Modern Art's Television Project, 1952–1955" (Ph.D. diss., McGill University, 2000). For a useful overview of one of MoMA's design projects and its relationship to department stories, retail, and American industry, see Edward Eigen and Terence Riley, "Between the Museum and the Marketplace: Selling Good Design," in *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-century: At Home and Abroad*, ed. John Szarkowski, *Studies in Modern Art*, vol. 4 (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1994), 150–79. Work on the interface between the sciences and cinema has broached the subject of the museum. For discussion of the American Museum of Natural History and film, see, for instance, Alison Griffiths, *Wondrous Difference: Cinema, Anthropology, and Turn-of-the-Century Visual Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). For some discussion of the ways in which film has been used in various projects supported by natural history museums, see Gregg Mitman, *Reel Nature: America's Romance with Wildlife on Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); and Mitman, "Cinematic Nature: Hollywood Technology, Popular Culture, and the American Museum of Natural History," *Isis* 84 (1993): 637–61.

9. Lynn Spigel, "High Culture in Low Places: Television and Modern Art, 1950–1970," in *Welcome to the Dreamhouse* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 265–309; Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

10. For a new translation of Benjamin's classic essay, see "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings* Vol. 3, 1935–1938, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Howard Eiland, and others (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2002), 101–33.

11. For complementary explorations of this phenomenon, specifically in relation to books, see Janice A. Radway, *A Feeling for Books: The Book-of-the-Month Club, Literary Taste, and Middle-Class Desire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Joan Shelley Rubin, *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992). Rubin also addresses the importance of radio for the generation of middlebrow sensibilities about books.

12. Raymond Williams, "Introduction," in *Visions and Blueprints: Avant-Garde Culture and Radical Politics in Early Twentieth-Century Europe*, ed. Peter Collier and Edward Timms (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988). See also Williams, *The Politics of Modernism* (London: Verso, 1996).

13. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw, *Theory and History of Literature*, vol. 4 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 49.

14. Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*.



15. Organized from paintings loaned temporarily to the Met, an exhibition called *Modern French Painting*, held in 1921, included works by Cezanne, van Gogh, Gauguin, Matisse, and Picasso. The display of paintings from Picasso's Rose Period invited outbursts of criticism. This exhibit is the one notable exception to the Met's curatorial disinclination toward any comprehensive approach to modern art. For a more thorough discussion of modernism and the 1920s, with particular attention to critics and institutions, see Susan Noyes Platt, *Modernism in the 1920s: Interpretations of Modern Art in New York from Expressionism to Constructivism* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1985).

16. Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow / Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

17. *Ibid.*, 223; see also Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994).

18. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, 146–60, 232.

19. Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Tradition," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 1–15.

20. For more on this, see Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820–1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978); Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in New York City, 1880–1920* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870–1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Lee Grieveson, *Policing Cinema: Movies and Censorship in Early-Twentieth-Century America* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004).

21. Grace Fisher Ramsey, *Educational Work in Museums of the United States* (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1938), 111. See also Griffiths, *Wondrous Difference*.

22. Ramsey, *Educational Work in Museums*, 173.

23. The Met sold these reproductions in the museum from the mid-1870s onward, often in varied sizes and alongside catalogues and other forms of merchandise. These photographs were self-consciously understood as methods by which to circulate the museum's holdings widely and efficiently, which served the double purpose of publicity and popular education. For more on the Met's reproductions program, see Regina Maria Kellerman, *The Publications and Reproductions Program of the Metropolitan Museum of Art: A Brief History* [pamphlet] (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1981).

24. By 1915, this collection has grown to include 34,219 slides. This collection was lent to 876 borrowers in its first four years (Ramsey, *Educational Work in Museums*, 171). See also Grace Fisher Ramsey, "The Film Work of the American Museum of Natural History," *Journal of Educational Sociology* 13, no. 5 (January 1940): 280–84.

25. See Elias Katz, "Educational Possibilities of Motion Picture Art Courses," *International Review of Educational Cinematography* 6 (January 1934): 29–35.

26. This includes exhibitions of cameras and projectors at the Smithsonian Institute, which were largely conducted in discussion with and/or aided by the support of industry organizations such as the SMPE and the MPPDA. Film writers such as Terry Ramsaye were also often consulted and/or actively involved in such discussions. For more on the history of exhibition of film technology, rather than film images, see Alison Trope, "Le Cinéma Pour Le Cinéma: Making a Museum of the Moving Image," *Moving Image* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 29–68.

27. See "Motion Picture Film from the American Museum of Natural History," *School and Society* 31, no. 786 (January 18, 1930): 80–81. One article stated that in a twelve-month period thirty-three hundred film reels had been distributed to 122 schools. "Museum Service," *Movie Makers* 3, no. 4 (1928): 256. The museum's holdings were published as American Museum of Natural History, Department of Education, *Free Motion Pictures (16mm Width) for General Circulation* (New York: American Museum of Natural History, Department of Public Education, n.d.). Anthony Slide also reports that films were used by museums in St. Louis and Cleveland in 1923 (Slide, *Before Video*, 62). Stephen Groening has established that films were used at the Bell Museum of Natural History, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, from as early as 1916. "Motion Pictures at the James Ford Bell Museum of Natural History, 1915–1946" (paper presented at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies conference, March 2003, Minneapolis, Minnesota). For a general history of the American Museum of Natural History and its various undertakings, see Lyle Rexer and Rachel Klein, *American Museum of Natural History: 125 Years of Expedition and Discovery* (New York: H. N. Abrams in association with the American Museum of Natural History, 1995).

28. Ramsay, *Educational Work in Museums*, 184. T. R. Adam noted that the Museum of Natural History's Film Library held 601 reels of 35mm film and 1,400 reels of 16 mm films. T. R. Adam, *The Museum and Popular Culture* (New York: American Association for Adult Education, 1939), 152. During the mid-1930s, this same museum would serve as a site for film exhibitions sponsored by the Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art. The Museum of Natural History had an auditorium large enough to house the growing audiences for the Film Library's programs (see figures 12 and 13).

29. The best readily available source for information about the Metropolitan's educational programs and film programs is its widely circulated in-house publication, the *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*. For a general history of the Met, see Calvin Tomkins, *Merchants and Masterpieces: The Story of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1970).

30. During this period Erwin Panofsky provides an exception that proves the rule I am identifying. In 1936, he gave a lecture at the Metropolitan, reported in local papers precisely for its unusual subject matter: film as art. Headlines declared, "Films Are Treated as Real Art by Lecturer at Metropolitan," *New York Herald Tribune*, November 16, 1936, Film Library Scrapbooks, Special Collections, Film Study Center, Department of Film and Media, Museum

of Modern Art. Panofsky's lecture was described as one accompanied by "old-time" films, arranged by staff of the Film Library. On Panofsky's ideas about film and art at this time, see T. Y. Levin, "Iconology at the Movies: Panofsky's Film Theory," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 27–55.

31. Ramsey, *Educational Work in Museums*, 175.

32. Rawlins, "Educational Metamorphosis," 130–32.

33. The WPA itself circulated 450 traveling exhibitions. *Ibid.*, 141–42.

34. T. R. Adam (*Museum and Popular Culture*, 49) reports that 60 new art museums were established during the years 1921 and 1929. In 1930, there were 167 art museums and 125 science museums in the United States.

35. Daniel Catton Rich, "The Art Museum and the Community Art Center," *Museum News* 18 (February 15, 1941): 10–11.

36. For a more complete overview of these developments, see Rawlins, "Educational Metamorphosis," esp. 130–60. For more specific work on philanthropies and libraries, see Mary B. Haskell, "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime? The Rockefeller Family and Libraries," *Libraries and Culture* 31, no. 1 (1996): 130–43; George S. Bobinski, *Carnegie Libraries: Their History and Impact on American Public Library Development* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1969). For a discussion of New Deal projects, the welfare state, and literature, see Michael Szalay, *New Deal Modernism: American Literature and the Invention of the Welfare State* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

37. See Arthur Zilversmit, *Changing Schools: Progressive Education Theory and Practice, 1930–1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), esp. 1–19, 37–63.

38. See Harold W. Stubblefield and Patrick Keane, *Adult Education in the American Experience: From the Colonial Period to the Present* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994).

39. Adam, *Museum and Popular Culture*, 8, 10.

40. *Ibid.*, 20, 81.

41. *Ibid.*, 79.

42. Ramsey, *Educational Work in Museums*, 195–97. See also "Museums and Newspapers Co-operate in Roto-Radio Talk," *Museum News* 6 (April 15, 1929): 1; "Lantern Slides Supplement Museum Radio Talk," *Museum News* 6 (November 1, 1929) 2; "Illustrated Talks by Radio," *Museum News* 1 (June 15, 1924): 2; "New Automatic Motion Picture Projector Installed in Three Museums," *Museum News* 9 (February 1, 1931): 4; Richard F. Bach "Neighbourhood Exhibition of the Metropolitan Museum of Art," *Museum News* 15 (September 1, 1938): 7–8.

43. As a point of reference, by 1934—only five years old—MoMA listed twenty-five separate publications committed to a range of subjects, including nineteenth- and twentieth-century painters and sculptors, architecture, and theater art. The museum reportedly sold these books and catalogues below cost as part of its educational service to students and the public.

44. Alfred H. Barr Jr., “The 1929 Multi-departmental Plan for the Museum of Modern Art: Its Origins, Development and Partial Realization” Department of Film Series, SC-FSC, 2.

45. Irving Sandler, “Introduction,” in *Defining Modern Art: Selected Writings of Alfred Barr* ed. Amy Newman and Irving Sandler (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1986), 8.

46. Alice Goldfarb Marquis, *Alfred H. Barr, Jr.: Missionary for the Modern* (New York: Contemporary Books, 1989), 42.

47. Barr, “A Modern Art Questionnaire” (1927), in *Defining Modern Art*, 56–61; Barr, “A New Museum” (1929), in *Defining Modern Art*, 73–76.

48. Saks Fifth Avenue was well known at the time for its window displays of modern art. It is cited here in recognition of its important contributions to popularizing modern mannerism in pictorial and decorative arts.

49. For more on the history of the museum, see Russel Lynes, *Good Old Modern: An Intimate Portrait of the Museum of Modern Art* (New York: Atheneum, 1973); and Sybil Gordon Kantor, *Alfred H. Barr, Jr., and the Intellectual Origins of the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).

50. Alfred Barr (attributed), press release, August 1929, Museum of Modern Art Library, New York; see also Barr, 1929, “A New Art Museum,” in *Defining Modern Art*, 69–72.

51. Barr himself acknowledges the profound impact of Bauhaus models on his thinking. See Barr, “The 1929 Multi-departmental Plan for the Museum of Modern Art,” in *Defining Modern Art*, 2.

52. Marquis, *Alfred H. Barr, Jr.*, 49.

53. Gropius quoted in Éva Forgács, *The Bauhaus Idea and Bauhaus Politics*, trans. John Batki (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1995), 27.

54. Barr, “Bauhaus 1919–1928: Preface,” in *Defining Modern Art*, 100. Interestingly, Barr’s own father objected to the inclusion of movies in his original plan. Barr, “The 1929 Multi-departmental Plan,” 4.

55. For an early example of Barr’s support for integrating the machine and its products—the automobile, steam radiators, and ten-cent crockery—into contemporary discourses of art, see his introduction to Philip Johnson, *Machine Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1934).

56. Barr was also impressed by Dutch de Stijl but even more by Soviet constructivism and the Left Front (LEF), consisting of poet Vladimir Mayakovsky, journalist Sergei Tretyakov, theater director Vsevolod Meyerhold, and filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein. See Barr, “Russian Diary,” in *Defining Modern Art*, 103–7.

57. “Without an appreciative audience, the work of art is stillborn. The public must be ready, through a knowledge and understanding no less exacting than that of the artist, to inspire art and make it live. The more intelligent and widespread this reception, the more vital and significant art becomes. The public, therefore, shares equally with the artist the exciting responsibility of carry-

ing on the great tradition of living art." Barr, "Public as Artist" [pamphlet] (1932), MoMA Library, 1.

58. Ibid.

59. Sandler, "Introduction," 13.

60. Barr's hope that the museum would occupy an important place within contemporary debate was quickly realized, as the museum became a controversial site for contesting as much as celebrating modern art. Many such attacks took clear form in 1939 as tensions about the European political situation grew. Criticism focused primarily on MoMA's Eurocentrism and its ostensible neglect of American artists. Many of these complaints also targeted MoMA's display of abstract art, identifying this tendency as ideologically suspect, and offered socialist realist art as the superior alternative (Sandler, "Introduction," 15–17n42). Attacks on the museum's policies continued throughout the post-war years, as did the defense of its practices from many political radicals who opposed aesthetic censure of any sort. For an overview of this debate, see Sandler, "Introduction," 24–27.

61. Attention to global simultaneity enabled by mass media reached an even higher peak in 1955 when MoMA conceived its Family of Man exhibit as one that would open simultaneously in New York, Europe, Asia, and Latin America, and thereafter travel globally for two years. Phillips, "Judgement Seat of Photography."

62. Edsel Ford has his own extensive private art collection. He and his wife, Eleanor, were also avid students of the arts, enjoying the benefits of private tutorials with the head of the Detroit Institute of the Arts, William Valentiner. For more on Whitney, see chapter 4.

63. For a more thorough discussion of Barr's management style and the museum's relationship to modern industry, see Nancy Einreinhofer, "The Scholar and the Capitalist: The Common Goals of Alfred H. Barr and Nelson Rockefeller in Building the Museum of Modern Art," in *The American Art Museum: Elitism and Democracy* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997), 150–69.

64. Harris notes the influence of new forms of "modern" expression, which embraced technological and reproducible modes of expression (photography and film) rather than more traditional modes such as painting and sculpture. Moreover, machines were something of a fashion unto themselves. For more on this, see Neil Harris, "Yesterday's World of Tomorrow," *ArtNews* 78, no. 8 (October 1979), 69–73; see also Alice Goldfarb Marquis, *Hopes and Ashes: The Birth of Modern Times, 1929–1939* (New York: Free Press, 1986). For a compelling discussion of MoMA's relationship to industrial design, consumable objects, and domesticity, see Felicity Scott, "From Industrial Art to Design: The Purchase of Domesticity at MoMA, 1929–1959," *Lotus International*, no. 97 (1998): 106–43.

65. Lynes, *Good Old Modern*, 135. For more on MoMA's public relations practices and its prescient mix of publicity and art exhibition, see *ibid.*, 129–36.

66. Museum of Modern Art, *The Year's Work: Annual Report to Trustees and the Corporation Members of the Museum of Modern Art, June 30,*

1939–July 1, 1940 (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1940), 4. MoMA's early experiments with television were linked to the museum's new building, opened in 1939, and the World's Fair. One of these programs was an unusual undertaking, a broadcast of a recently found motion picture in which a fifteenth-century Flemish masterpiece *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* by Van Eyck was pictured. Alfred Barr himself introduced the film for the program. The museum press release covering the broadcast read: "He will point out the searching power of the motion picture camera in bringing to light for analysis even the small detail of any masterpiece, ancient or modern." Through the press release, Barr is quoted as declaring that the motion picture "revealed details more vividly and dramatically than the original painting." Here film is co-articulated with revealing a privileged view of Van Eyck's work. Most likely this is rhetoric designed to offset the dismal quality of the fifteen-minute broadcast. The film was shown through the courtesy of the Belgian commissioner general to the World's Fair. MoMA, "Announcing 2nd Television Program" [press release], June 8, 1939, MoMA Library, 1.

67. Lynes, *Good Old Modern*, 126; Harris, "Yesterday's World of Tomorrow," 70.

68. Allan Wallach, "The Museum of Modern Art: The Past's Future," *Journal of Design History* 5, no. 3 (1992): 208.

69. This exhibit was arranged by John Abbott, Allen Porter, and Fritz Lang. It used Lang's *You Only Live Once* (1937) as the basis for an account of the processes involved in making a movie. It is important to note that this exhibit was held in the Film Library offices at 485 Madison Avenue (the CBS Building) rather than at the museum's primary site. This in part supports the claims made by Iris Barry and others that during these early years the Film Library was less than an equal and respected part of the museum's whole. For a more complete listing of MoMA's exhibitions from 1929 until 1972, see Lynes, *Good Old Modern*, 446–69. I discuss this issue further in chapters 4 and 5.

70. For more on this, see Susan Noyes Platt, "Modernism, Formalism, and Politics: The 'Cubism and Abstract Art' Exhibition of 1936 at the Museum of Modern Art," *Art Journal* 47, no. 4 (1988): 284–95.

71. For more on Barr's exhibition practices and design of museum space, see Staniszewski, *Power of Display*.

72. See "Work of Prize-Winning American Designers Goes on Exhibition at Museum of Modern Art and in Department Stores throughout the Country" [press release], September 22, 1941, MoMA Library. Department stores included L. S. Ayres and Company, Indianapolis; Barker Bros., Los Angeles; Bloomingdale's, New York; Marshall Field and Company, Chicago; Gimbel Brothers, Philadelphia; Jordan Marsh Co., Boston; and Kaufmann Dept. Stores, Pittsburgh. Items circulated were winning design items from contests held by the Department of Industrial Design in late 1940 and early 1941. Such programs continued throughout this period and took on greater visibility in the 1950s with the museum's "Good Design" seal, placed on objects deemed to exemplify the best of modern design and housekeeping, sold at department stores

throughout the United States. See Eigan and Riley, “Between the Museum and the Marketplace.” For a beautifully crafted overview of modern design and department stores in the 1920s, see Marilyn F. Friedman, *Selling Good Design: Promoting the Early Modern Interior* (New York: Rizzoli, 2003).

73. Museum of Modern Art, *Annual Report to the Trustees and the Corporation Members of the Museum of Modern Art June 30, 1939–July 1, 1940* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1940), 8.

74. Barr, “Present Status and Future Direction of the Museum of Modern Art,” August 6, 1933, MoMA Archives, Alfred H. Barr Jr. Papers (AAA: 3266; 120).

75. Barr might have embraced the means of mass media, but he was no populist. Frequently, his writing indicated that he targeted popular taste by also attacking other tastemakers. On the formulation of his 1929 multidepartmental plan he wrote: “I wanted to show New York the best of modern architecture, posters, chairs, movies, and attack the complacency with which our successful designers contemplated their modernistic skyscrapers and refrigerators, Gothic dormitories, pompous superfilms, banal billboards and the cynical promotion of ‘artificial obsolescence.’” Barr, “Multi-departmental Plan.”

76. Artemas Packard, *A Report on the Development of the Museum of Modern Art* (1937), MoMA Library.

77. *Ibid.*, 129.

78. *Ibid.*, 131.

79. Packard’s report also demonstrates some of the gendered ways in which the idea of functional art was working its way through the museum. In order to address the need of expanding the museum’s audience, Packard concluded that as it stood, art and design were primarily feminine pursuits. As such, he conceded that “no really significant development of contemporary art can take place in this country without the whole-hearted participation of men whose intimate relations with commerce, industry, and productive enterprise of all sorts makes them, rather than women, the immediate instruments for applying the Arts to practical life” (*ibid.*, 88). Packard suggested several ways the museum might attract more men to its exhibits. He recommended an increase in displays of industrial arts, adding that the museum might also attempt to generate a collector-investor’s club for men in which groups could purchase particular pieces of art and then observe their increase in value, like stocks (90–91). Other efforts to attract men included extending museum opening hours past the close of the business day.

80. The Young People’s Gallery was described in museum literature as a vital “educational experiment,” conducted in concert with twelve New York area public schools. The plan included circulating exhibitions to be sent to local high schools, as well as programs to educate teachers in issues pertaining to those circulating exhibits. Further, gallery space was allocated in which children would either curate art held by the museum or, alternatively, curate their own paintings. Such work would be hung at eye level to accommodate diminutive viewers. The Young People’s Gallery was designed to house workstations

where art could be created, as well as chairs where children could sit, lounge, and play. Such projects were linked directly to the goals of nurturing good and healthy citizens. Creativity was also integral to the individual and vulnerable child, which the museum sought to make part of its overall civic intervention. The Deweyan principles of this approach are apparent. D'Amico himself was an avowed devotee of the Progressive movement; in 1940 he contributed heavily to a report authored by the Progressive Education Association, *The Visual Arts in General Education* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1940).

81. For more on D'Amico and the art education programs at MoMA, see Carol Morgan, "From Modernist Utopia to Cold War Reality: A Critical Moment in Museum Education," in *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-century: Continuity and Change*, ed. John Elderfield, *Studies in Modern Art*, vol. 5 (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1995), 151–73.

82. One of the most elaborate examples of Barr's own dilemma's in this regard is evidenced by a memo he issued after the museum's 1939 gala opening, which included a nationally broadcast radio show. The program was a spectacular event, with participants ranging from Walt Disney to Franklin Roosevelt. The host, Lowell Thomas, referred to Nelson Rockefeller—the newly elected president of the museum—by his first name and made irreverent remarks about Meret Oppenheim's *Fur Lined Tea Cup* being moth-eaten. Barr railed that the publicity value could not outweigh the extent to which the museum's reputation had been sullied by the undignified tone. The transcript for this radio show and Barr's response to it are held in the Alfred H. Barr Jr. Papers, MoMA Archives.

83. MoMA, "Art through the Window" [press release], July 7, 1937, MoMA Library. Empty spaces in Rockefeller Center were also used as temporary galleries for other museum exhibits as renovations were being undertaken toward construction of the new building on West Fifty-third Street.

84. Rental fees for these exhibits ranged from \$15 to \$500 (the equivalent of \$191.46 to \$6,381.91 in 2003). Most rented for \$100 or less (the equivalent of \$1,276.39 in 2003). The cost was presumably justified by theater owners as a publicity expense, as they used the cache of modern art displays to draw in more patrons and lend prestige to their theaters. New York's Roxy Theatre displayed paintings from MoMA's programs, including modern watercolor and pastel reproductions, posters by Cassandre, reproductions of Mexican frescoes by Diego Rivera, and reproductions of paintings and drawings by van Gogh. An exhibition held in the Fox Theater in St. Louis displayed architectural drawings and models by Le Corbusier, which, according to the press release, "stimulated a great deal of public interest and appreciative comment by St. Louis art critics." The theater made arrangements for monthly exhibitions from the museum. Such a phenomenon is noteworthy not only because it provides yet another example of attempts to make cinema respectable for middle-class patrons but because it suggests that film was also important for emergent concepts of art; art exhibition in movie theaters was purposefully orchestrated less to make film respectable and more to make art seem relevant and accessi-



ble. MoMA, “Exhibitions of Modern Art . . .” [press release], September 30, 1937, MoMA Library.

85. MoMA, “Mrs. Dwight Davis of Washington Appointed as ‘Out-of-Town Chairman’ of MoMA’s Membership Committee” [press release], April 27, 1937, MoMA Library. An entire MoMA bulletin was devoted to these committees. See *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art: The Museum’s Committees Outside New York* 5, no. 3 (March 1938).

86. MoMA, *The Year’s Work: Annual Report of the Museum of Modern Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1937). Such ideas resonated with trends in natural history and anthropology museums to merchandise their collections, beginning as early as the late 1910s. Traces of these activities can be found in the bulletins of the American Museum of Natural History and in the publication of the American association of museum professionals, *Museum News*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art also began to self-consciously conceive of itself as a place to shop during the 1920s. For more on this, see Haidee Wasson, “Every Home an Art Museum: Towards a Genealogy of the Museum Gift Shop,” in *Residual Media*, ed. Charles Acland (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming).

87. Sarah Newmeyer, July 3, 1940, “Memo Re: Booklet on Film Programs,” RE, RG 4, Projects, Box 139. Folder 1367, Rockefeller Archive Center.

88. Early in 1940, the museum sponsored a contest entitled “The Artist as Reporter.” In collaboration with *P.M.*, New York’s forthcoming (and short-lived) pictorial evening newspaper, a search was launched for reporters capable of rendering the day’s news in a dramatic image. A special jury selected the best of the entries among the nearly two thousand that were received. The public voted for the best of these, awarding the largest cash prize to the winner. MoMA, “The Museum of Modern Art Announced Today . . .” [press release], March 8, 1940, MoMA Library; MoMA, “Great Number of Entries Received in ‘Artist as Reporter’ Competition . . .” [press release], n.d., MoMA Library.

89. MoMA, “A Symposium on Subway Art” [press release], March 1, 1938, MoMA Library.

90. There were some exceptions, notably John Hay Whitney, Alan Blackburn, and Edward Warburg. Barr makes mention of some of these in “Multi-departmental Plan,” 7.

91. Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, 4.

92. For more on this, see Marquis, *Alfred H. Barr, Jr.*, 35–46.

93. Barr, “Multi-departmental Plan,” 6.

94. Barr’s views were not always unconditionally accepted by MoMA’s trustees, who tended to be more conservative about exhibition programs and more interested in their paintings and sculptures. This disagreement also partly led to Barr’s dismissal in 1943. For more on this rift, see Sandler, “Introduction,” 28, 29; and Marquis, *Alfred H. Barr, Jr.*, 203–10.

95. See Barr, “Sergei Michailovitch Eisenstein” (1928), in *Defining Modern*

Art, 142–46; Barr, “Nationalism in German Films” (1934), in *Defining Modern Art*, 158–62.

96. Barr, “Eisenstein,” 142.

97. Marquis, *Alfred H. Barr, Jr.*, 52.

98. Barr, “Eisenstein,” 146.

99. *Ibid.*, 142, 143.

100. Barr [attributed], “The Belief That New York Needs” [press release], August 1929, MoMA Library.

101. MoMA Archives, Alfred H. Barr Jr. Papers (AAA: 2174; 633); as cited in Amy Newman “The Critic/Historian,” in *Defining Modern Art*, 101–2.

102. Barr, “Nationalism in German Films,” 159.

103. Barr’s reliance on the precepts of freedom of expression fed his concerns for the unhindered exploration of aesthetic forms. This has led to accusations that Barr was overly dependent on formalism at the expense of the social and political mechanisms linked to form. Some of his critics forgave this because of his general contributions to art historical knowledge; others have been less gracious. An example of the former can be found in a response to Barr’s writing on abstract art, crafted by Meyer Schapiro, a lifelong friend of Barr’s. See Schapiro, “Nature of Abstract Art,” *Marxist Quarterly* 1 (January–March 1937): 77–98. For an example of less generous responses, which are derived primarily from Barr’s relationship to the postwar emergence of abstract expressionism, see Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*. For a thorough assessment of Barr’s career and his shifting relationship to formalism, see Sandler, “Introduction,” 7–47.

104. Johnson later described Barr’s negotiations over architecture, film, and photography as persistent and passionate “pleading.” MoMA Archives, Oral History Project, interview with Phillip Johnson, 1990, 27. Of these three areas, photography was the last to be officially accepted by trustees. Beaumont Newhall became the department’s first director in 1940. For an excellent overview of the Architecture Department and the museum’s efforts to promote the International Style, see Henry Mathews, “The Promotion of Modern Architecture by the Museum of Modern Art in the 1930s,” *Journal of Design History* 7, no. 1 (1994): 43–59. For an overview of MoMA’s direct interventions into grand architectural statements and signature buildings, see Dominic Ricciotti, “The 1939 Building of the Museum of Modern Art: The Goodwin-Stone Collaboration,” *American Art Journal* 17, no. 3 (Summer 1985): 50–76. For a critical discussion of MoMA’s photography department, see Phillips, “Judgment Seat of Photography.”

105. For more on Iris Barry, see Haidee Wasson “Writing the Cinema into Daily Life: Iris Barry and the Emergence of British Film Criticism,” in *Young and Innocent? British Silent Cinema, 1896–1930*, ed. Andrew Higson (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002), 321–337.

106. Barry was unafraid to celebrate the popular, bawdy, or low-budget film. She reverently described Tarzan as “a silly symphony gone grand.” Barry,

"Film Comments," *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 1, no. 9 (May 1934): 4. Barry also favored *The Invisible Man* (James Whale), deeming it "a brilliant choice of subject, brilliantly executed by Claude Rains." Barry, "Film Comments," *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 1, no. 5 (January 1934): 4.

107. Barry, "Film Comments," *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 1, no. 1 (June 1933): 4.

108. Despite the film's success, it was also quite controversial. For more discussion of the furor over West and Paramount's purposeful sidestepping of the Production Code, see Leonard J. Jeff and Jerold L. Simmons, *The Dame in the Kimono: Hollywood, Censorship, and the Production Code from the 1920s to the 1960s* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990), 17–32.

109. Barry, "Film Comments" (June 1933), 1. A brief article in a museum bulletin published in February 1934 noted that among all the articles and notes in the publication, the "Film Comments" had elicited by far the greatest volume of correspondence. Reportedly, one of these letters was from John Ford, who upon reading Barry's review of *Doctor Bull* (1933) wrote to her: "I really must see 'Dr. Bull.' I directed it but I haven't seen it." Barry [attributed], "Films and the Museum," *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 1, no. 6 (February 1, 1934): 3.

110. Mary Lea Bandy, "Nothing Sacred: 'Jock Whitney Snares Antiques for Museum,'" in *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-century: Continuity and Change*, ed. John Elderfield, Studies in Modern Art, vol. 5 (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1995), 77. For more on Barry and film, see Haidee Wasson "'Some Kind of Racket': The Museum of Modern Art's Film Library, Hollywood and the Problem of Film Art, 1935," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 5–29.

111. Barr, "Notes on Departmental Expansion of the Museum" (1932), Department of Film Series, SC-FSC.

112. *Ibid.*, 5.

113. Barr had met Ruttman and seen his films during his visit to the Bauhaus in 1927. *Ibid.*, 6.

114. See Barr, "Public as Artist," wherein the rationale for a film department is explicitly linked to the creation of a public.

115. Chaplin provides the common exception to this, yet Barr avoided fully acknowledging Chaplin's genius as a popular performer.

116. Barr, "Notes on Departmental Expansion," 7. Barr did not have a very convincing plan for funding the Film Library. Philanthropic support was never mentioned in these early blueprints. He hoped that film and equipment manufacturers, commercial film producers, or private citizens capably endowed might support the endeavor. In this report, Barr asserts that architecture and movies are the two most important twentieth-century arts.

117. Barr, "Multi-departmental Plan," 9.

118. Barry briefly discusses the resistance to film at the museum, particularly to popular films, in "The Film Library and How It Grew," *Film Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (Summer 1969): 19–27; see also Marquis, *Alfred H. Barr, Jr.*, 128.

119. The Payne Whitney estate was built in part on an inheritance from Oliver Payne, Whitney's maternal uncle, who was a founding member of Standard Oil. The fortune grew primarily through continued investments in oil, tobacco, banking, and Singer sewing machines. For more on the Payne and Whitney fortunes, and on John Hay Whitney, see E. J. Kahn Jr., *Jock: The Life and Times of John Hay Whitney* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981). On rare occasions Whitney's name and his father's estate were explicitly invoked when library staff attempted to gather support in Hollywood. John Abbott, n.d., "letter to Douglas Fairbanks," USS MSS 99AN, Series 2A, Box 80, Folder 13, Museum of Modern Art Film Library Corp., United Artists Collection, State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Yet the money Whitney contributed to the Film Library was almost never mentioned in the press. Rather, the name of the Rockefeller Foundation was most often used. For more on the Rockefeller Foundation's film projects, see William J. Buxton, "Reaching Human Minds: Rockefeller Philanthropy and Communications, 1935–39," in *The Development of the Social Sciences in the United States and Canada: The Role of Philanthropy*, ed. Theresa Richardson and Donald Fisher (Stanford, CT: Ablex, 1999), 177–92.

120. Austin may be responsible for the first film-as-art series in an American museum, when in 1929 he arranged for regular showings of such films as *Joan of Arc*, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, and *Le Million*. For more on the Wadsworth screenings, see Alison Trope, "Mysteries of the Celluloid Museum: Showcasing the Art and Artifacts of Cinema" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1999), 24–84.

121. John Abbott and Iris Barry, "An Outline of a Project for Founding the Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art" (1935), *Film History* 7, no. 3 (1995): 325–35.

122. The Rockefeller Foundation supplied \$500 toward expenses incurred preparing this document. Grant Action, RF RG 1.1, Series 200 R, Box 250, Folder 2983, RAC.

123. Abbott and Barry, "Outline," 3.

124. *Ibid.*, 3, 13.

125. *Ibid.*, 1–2.

126. *Ibid.*, 21.

127. For more on the Film Library's inclusion of American films and their early relationship to the industry, see Wasson, "Some Kind of Racket."

#### CHAPTER 4. AN AWKWARD AND DANGEROUS TASK

1. Grant Action, RF RG 1.1, Series 200 R, Box 250, Folder 2983, Rockefeller Archive Center. The foundation promised a total of \$120,000 over a three-year period, from June 1935 until June 1938. In the first year, \$80,000 of this was given by the Rockefeller Foundation with a matching ratio of 4:1, meaning \$20,000 would have come from Whitney. Each of the following years, the foundation required a 1:1 matching ratio, with \$20,000 each year from the foundation and the same amount from other sources.

2. A letter to Douglas Fairbanks from John Abbott soliciting support indicates that the balance of Film Library funding came from Whitney, through the estate of his father, Payne Whitney. This letter also suggests that Barry and Abbott believed using Whitney's name would broker favor with members of the industry, although Whitney's name was rarely used publicly. Abbott to Douglas Fairbanks, letter, USS MSS 99 AN, Series 2A, Box 80, Folder B, Museum of Modern Art Film Library Corporation, United Artists Collection, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

3. Iris Barry, "Report to Rockefeller Foundation," March 1, 1948, NAR RG 4, Series 111: 42, Box 139, Folder 1367, RAC.

4. For more details on Whitney's art collecting, his relationship to the film industry, and his efforts to assist the Film Library see E. J. Kahn Jr. *Jock: The Life and Times of John Hay Whitney* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 105–44.

5. John Abbott and Iris Barry, "An Outline of a Project for Founding the Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art" (1935), *Film History* 7, no. 3 (1995): 325–35.

6. *Ibid.*, 3, 13.

7. Iris Barry, "The Film Library," in Museum of Modern Art, *Art in Progress: A Survey Prepared for the Fifteenth Anniversary of the Museum of Modern Art*, NY (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1944), 177–79.

8. *Ibid.*, 179. The mention of famous coffee is a reference to a Chase & Sanborn campaign that featured Hollywood celebrities. The ads promised coffee that was fresher and thus more flavorful and healthful. Bad coffee, the ads claimed, caused indigestion, sleeplessness, and bad nerves. The date on the Chase & Sanborn coffee can guaranteed greater value, quick minds, and even improved motor skills!

9. John Abbott to Abby Rockefeller, memo, February 26, 1935, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York, Early Museum History: Museum Matters, Motion Picture Committee and Department, 7.12.O.

10. Haverford and Bryn Mawr were sites for some of the Film Library's first programs and hosts to concurrently established film societies.

11. John Abbott to John Lee Clark, letter, February 16, 1935, RF RG 1.1, Series 200 R, Box 251, Folder 2996, RAC; "Questionnaire," MoMA Archives, Alfred H. Barr Jr. Papers, (Archives of American Art: 2166; 516).

12. Museum of Modern Art Film Library, "Film Library Report (1937)," Department of Film Series, Special Collections, Film Study Center, Department of Film and Media, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

13. Other archives also formed around this time, including a Swedish archive in 1933 and an Italian archive in 1935. For more on these early archives, see Raymond Borde, *Les cinémathèques* (Lausanne: Editions L'Age d'Homme, 1983), 79–80. Also important to note about this emerging international community of film archives is the prominent position often granted to Barry by this first generation of archivists. Even Henri Langlois, renowned curator of the Cinémathèque Française, proclaimed his debt to her, as did others.

Jacques Ledoux, a contemporary of Langlois, furthered this by stating that while all archivists are in some way children of Langlois, he is himself “the child of Iris Barry.” Quoted in Penelope Houston, *Keepers of the Frame: The Film Archives* (London: British Film Institute, 1994), 59.

14. Iris Barry, “The Film Library and How It Grew,” *Film Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (Summer 1969): 21.

15. Iris Barry, “Film Library, 1935–1941,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 8, no. 5 (1941): 8–9. During the war MoMA acted as a safe house for films feared to be at risk under the encroaching Nazi force. There was a particularly open exchange with Langlois, partly because of his acute fear that his precious films would be seized and used in munitions production, as was done during World War I. This arrangement is discussed briefly in Richard Griffith, “Adventures of a Film Library” [speech] 1941, Annual Meeting of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers 1941, Department of Film Series, SC-FSC; and also at early Film Library Advisory Committee meetings. See “Meeting Notes,” RF RG 1.1, Series 200 R, Box 250, Folder 2986, RAC.

16. Leyda also worked with Dziga Vertov and Joris Ivens, who was in Moscow making a film. Leyda was invited to study at the institute as one of several foreign students the school brought in. While there he wrote articles for *Theatre Arts Monthly* and edited a special Soviet issue of this same journal (September 1936). He also prepared a special issue for *New Theatre* (January 1935). Once in New York, Leyda was employed at the Film Library by a special grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. He performed a range of duties, including preparing, titling, and adapting films for the library’s circulating programs; providing research assistance to students, writers, and other Film Library staff; acquiring material for museum collection; preparing an index system for the library’s films; and projecting films. John Abbott to John Marshall, memo, October 21, 1937, RF RG 1.1, Series 200 R, Box 250, Folder 2985, RAC.

17. MoMA Film Library, “Film Library Report (1937),” 27, 39, 40.

18. On the exchange of films by diplomatic pouch, see John Abbott to John Marshall, letter, May 1, 1938, RF RG 1.1, Series 200 R, Box 250, Folder 2986, RAC.

19. Barry and Abbott also began to collect an extensive assortment of printed materials, catalogues, stills, production notes, and scripts. Some of these acquisitions are listed in MoMA Film Library, “Film Library Report (1937).” See also “Report of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library as of November 6, 1936,” Department of Film Series, SC-FSC.

20. Barry, “Film Library, 1935–1941,” 10. All inflections and commentary belong to the original author.

21. See Barry, “Re: Film Staff,” letter, March 26, 1940, Department of Film Series, Special Collections, Film Study Center, Department of Film and Media, Museum of Modern Art. Staff members at this time included Abbott, Edward Kerns, William Jamison, Allen Porter, Jay Leyda, Theodore Huff, Arthur Rosenheimer (aka Arthur Knight), Helen Grey, Ann Warren, and Florence West.

22. "List American Films," February 1, 1939, Department of Film Series, SC-FSC.

23. Barry, "Film Library, 1935–1941," 10.

24. Barry herself further speculated that in Germany, for instance, even the small amount they paid in American currency for film prints was a much-needed boost of "hard currency." Barry, "Autobiographical Notes," Iris Barry Collection, Department of Film Series, SC-FSC.

25. Others were invited but were not able or not willing to come during this period, such as Basil Wright, Benoit Levy, and Robert Flaherty.

26. See Jacobs, *Rise of the American Film*; Gilbert Seldes, *The Movies Come from America* (New York: Scribner's, 1937); and Harold Leonard, ed., *The Film Index: A Bibliography*, vol. 1, *The Film as Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art and H. W. Wilson, 1941). While at the Film Library, Barry also translated Maurice Bardèche and Robert Brasillach's treatise on film history, which was published as *A History of Motion Pictures* (New York: Museum of Modern Art and W. W. Norton, 1938). In 1940, she researched and wrote *D. W. Griffith: American Film Master*, which was published that same year by the museum.

27. Some of these notes are readily available as Eileen Bowser, ed., *Film Notes* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1969). The Film Study Center of MoMA holds complete and original versions of these. David Bordwell has identified the strong influence of the Film Library's film notes on one of the oldest film societies in America, whose own programs and notes drew heavily on MoMA's. See Arthur Lenning, ed., *Film Notes* (Madison: Wisconsin Film Society, 1960), and *Classics of the Film* (Madison: Wisconsin Film Society, 1965). These are cited in David Bordwell, *On the History of Film Style* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 277n31. For a brief discussion of the importance of MoMA's Film Library for Canadian film societies, see Charles Acland, "National Dreams, International Encounters: The Formation of Canadian Film Culture in the 1930s," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 3, no. 1 (1994): 3–26. For more on MoMA's circulating film programs and university-based audiences, see chapter 5.

28. Apparently, this led to at least one success. A course at the University of North Carolina was to be developed directly by students in the Columbia class. Iris Barry, "Miss Barry's Report on the Work of the Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art," March 21, 1940, RF RG 1.1, Series 200 R, Box 251, Folder 2998, RAC.

29. MoMA Film Library, "Film Library Report (1937)," 7.

30. The National Board of Review held great significance for the museum as it was an established organization with a national base of support. It was replete with nationwide local chapters, radio programs, and several widely distributed publications that provided a crucial source of legitimation and informal collaboration. Many methods were adopted to obtain its sanction and its resources. For instance, MoMA officials frequently made appearances and gave speeches at board conventions. These speeches were usually published subse-

quently in the pages of organization bulletins, ensuring an even wider audience for its self-promotional rhetoric. For instance, Alan R. Blackburn Jr., an early museum administrator and friend of Phillip Johnson, made a speech at the annual meeting of the National Board of Review in 1933. He worked hard to dissociate the Film Library from the perceived elite remit of MoMA's film plans. He proclaimed: "Often the wrong interpretation is put on what is meant by art in motion pictures. We are not primarily interested in the so-called artistic pictures; we are interested in the picture you see every time you go to a motion picture house, in the commercial product mainly and chiefly." He continued by asserting that movies "are the real American art of the past decade." "Creating Motion Picture Departments in Museums of Art," *National Board of Review Magazine* 8, no. 6 (June 1933): 8. John Abbott also gave a speech to the board two years later in which he emphasized the library's efforts to identify and affirm the "traditions and tendencies" in motion picture art and history. "The Motion Picture and the Museum," *National Board of Review Magazine* 10, no. 6 (1935): 6–8. For a complete list of early speeches and public relations efforts, see "Rough Report on the Work of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library as of April 13th, 1936," RF RG 1.1, Series 200 R Box 250, Folder 2984, RAC. Copies of some of these speeches are held in the Department of Film Series, Archive Series, and Library of Congress Series, Special Collections, Film Study Center, Department of Film and Media, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Many of these speeches appear to have been written by Barry, though occasionally they were delivered by Abbott. Most of the drafts are in her handwriting.

31. Two such radio programs of note are "The Motion Picture" (January 1935) and "What's Art to Me?" [Program 6] (December 1939). The former was part of a radio series entitled *Art in America in Modern Times*, funded by the Carnegie Foundation and broadcast nationally on NBC. The series was organized by a representative group of museums and arts organizations. It included individual programs on photography, design, urban planning, stage design, architecture, painting, and movies. The program addressing film was written by Barry. Alfred Barr and Holger Cahill coedited a book based on the series. Holger Cahill and Alfred Barr Jr., eds., *Art in America in Modern Times* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1934). The "What's Art to Me?" program involved Cahill and Barry engaged in dialogue about how and why movies could be considered art. Its content was decidedly populist, with Barry herself exclaiming that "great movies are great shows." "What's Art to Me?" Program 6 (December 2, 1939, CBS, 6:30–6:45 P.M. Cahill was a devotee of American art and had advised Abby Rockefeller on her own collection. He had also acted as museum director during Barr's 1932–33 trip to Europe. Cahill was best known during the period as head of the WPA Art Project. The script for this radio show is held in the Department of Film Series, SC-FSC.

32. Barry's publication record alone is surprising in its size and diversity. See, for example, "Films for History," *Special Libraries*, October 1939, 258–60; "Motion Pictures as a Field of Research," *College Art Journal* 4, no. 4 (1945):



206–8; “Hunting the Film in Germany,” *American-German Review*, June 1937, 40–45; “Challenge of the Documentary Film,” *New York Times*, January 6, 1946, 1, 17; “The Film of Fact,” *Town and Country*, September 1946, 142, 253–56; “The Museum of Modern Art Film Library,” *Sight and Sound* 15, no. 18 (1936): 14–16; “Why Wait for Posterity?” *Hollywood Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (1946): 131–37; “Infant Days of the Movies,” *Radio City Music Hall Weekly* 1, no. 22 (1936): 4; and “The Museum of Modern Art Film Library: Last Year and This,” *Magazine of Art* 30 (1937): 41.

33. Iris Barry, “The Motion Picture,” in *Art in America in Modern Times*, ed. Holger Cahill and Alfred Barr Jr. (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1934), 91–93.

34. Barry, “The Film Library” (1944), 175. It should be noted that this was an official museum publication, which suggests that Barry’s words were carefully chosen. It is quite likely that the library’s position was seen as far more suspicious than this passage fully connotes.

35. For more on this, see Iris Barry to Rockefeller Foundation “Report,” March 1, 1948, NAR RG 4, Series 111: 42, Box 139, Folder 1367, RAC.

36. This is discussed further in chapter 3. See also Russel Lynes, *Good Old Modern: An Intimate Portrait of the Museum of Modern Art* (New York: Atheneum, 1973), 111; Alice Goldfarb Marquis, *Alfred H. Barr, Jr.: Missionary for the Modern* (New York: Contemporary Books, 1989), 128.

37. Abbott and Barry, “Outline,” 1–2.

38. *Ibid.*, 2.

39. MoMA Film Library, “Film Library Report (1937),” 9.

40. *Ibid.*, 7.

41. John Abbott to Abby Rockefeller, memo, June 7, 1935, MoMA Archives, Early Museum History: Museum Matters, Film Library Committee, 1.7.121. The great majority of these screenings were held off-site because the museum had no suitable space for projection. The screening programs of the museum are discussed more fully in chapter 5.

42. Abbott and Barry, “Outline,” 8.

43. *Ibid.*, 15.

44. Abbott argued similarly in other contexts. See Abbott, “The Motion Picture and the Museum”; and Abbott, “Organization and Work of the Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art,” *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers* 28, no. 3 (March 1937): 295–99. In this latter article, Abbott asserted that the lack of due praise and consideration to American films and the corollary view that only foreign films were art films were “wholly untenable” and that MoMA organized its programs, in part, to rectify this misconception (297).

45. These critiques are outlined in Lynes, *Good Old Modern*, 229; Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 59.

46. Iris Barry, “Films,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 5, nos. 4–5 (1938): 10–12. Program notes to this exhibition are published as Barry, “A Brief

History of the American Film 1895–1938,” in *Trois siècles d’art aux Etats-Unis* (Paris: Museum of Modern Art / Musée du Jeu de Paume, 1938), 97–101. This film was produced by David O. Selznick at Selznick International Pictures—a company co-owned by John Hay Whitney. Here one can begin to see the close relations among Whitney, his industry ties, and the Film Library, where a film directly linked to his company is forwarded as a model in a prominent museum show. Moreover, the timing of the exhibits suggests an attempt to imbue the museum with insider status vis-à-vis the film industry. The MoMA show was mounted before the film’s commercial release, demonstrating the mutually beneficial publicity function of the museum to cinema and of cinema to the museum.

47. Quoted in A. Conger Goodyear, *The Museum of Modern Art: The First Ten Years* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1943), 79.

48. John Abbott to John Marshall, letter, June 1, 1938, RF RG 1.1, Series 200 R, Box 250, Folder 2986, RAC.

49. *Ibid.*

50. Max Horkheimer, a prominent member of the Frankfurt School who was already safely in New York, wrote to Kracauer, telling him about the Film Library’s project. Meyer Schapiro, Marxist art historian at Columbia University, encouraged Kracauer to seek out Barry while the show was on. For more on this, see David Culbert, “The Rockefeller Foundation, the Museum of Modern Art Film Library, and Siegfried Kracauer, 1941,” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 13 (1991): 495–511.

51. Barry, “Film Library, 1935–1941,” 11.

52. Blackburn, “Creating Motion Picture Departments in Museums of Art,” 8.

53. Many of the film articles from *Hound and Horn* have been republished as George Amberg, ed., *Hound and Horn: Essays on Cinema* (New York: Arno Press, 1972).

54. Mumford wrote: “It is an unfortunate social accident—as has happened in so many departments of technics—that this art (film) should have been grossly diverted from its proper function by the commercial necessity for creating sentimental shows for an emotionally empty metropolitanized population, living vicariously on the kisses and cocktails and crimes and orgies and murders of their shadow-idols.” *Technics and Civilization* (1934; New York: Harcourt Brace, 1962), 341–42. Many of the films he mentions here were prominent elements of the Film Library’s early programs.

55. This idea has a readily identifiable international precedent in the Imperial War Museum. Established in 1917 by the British government, the museum began collecting films taken during World War I, which were intended to become part of a larger war memorial. The Imperial War Museum is generally recognized as the first noncommercial film archive in the world. Anthony Slide, *Nitrate Won’t Wait: A History of Film Preservation in the United States* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland, 1992), 11; Houston, *Keepers of the Frame*, 12–13. This claim may not be wholly accurate, however, because films certainly were

saved, albeit haphazardly, before this time. Nevertheless, the Imperial War Museum is likely the longest surviving archival institution and its collection the first to become part of a national monument to the atrocities of war. See also Roger Smither and David Walsh, "Unknown Pioneer: Edward Foxen Cooper and the Imperial War Museum Film Archive, 1919–1934," *Film History* 12, no. 2 (2000): 187–203.

56. The National Archive primarily collected films made by government agencies, including various branches of the military, the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Justice. For more on the development of the collection at the National Archive, see Dorothy Arbaugh, "Motion Pictures and the Future Historian," *Journal of the Society of American Archivists* 2, no. 2 (1939): 106–14. For details on the National Archive, as well as the subsequent development of the Library of Congress collection, see Doug Herrick, "Toward a National Film Collection: Motion Pictures at the Library of Congress," *Film Library Quarterly* 13, nos. 2/3 (1980): 5–25; and Barbara Demming, "The Library of Congress Film Project: Exposition of a Method," *Library of Congress Quarterly Journal* 2, no. 1 (1944): 3–36. The standard survey text on American film archives is Slide, *Nitrate Won't Wait*.

57. W. A. MacDonald, "The Film Library at Harvard," in *The Story of the Films*, ed. Joseph P. Kennedy (Chicago: A. W. Shaw, 1927), 358. Early on, Paul Sachs was active in discussions about this project. Sachs, a descendant from the Goldman-Sachs financial empire, left his position with the company to take up the directorship of the Fogg and a professorship at Harvard. Only two years later, one of his students, Alfred Barr, would begin discussions about a film department at the fledgling museum of which he was director. For more on this, see chapter 3. See also Sybil Gordon Kantor, *Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and the Intellectual Origins of the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002). General information about the Harvard program can be found in Kennedy, *Story of the Films*. More specific are a series of documents in the MPPDA collection, lent to the author courtesy of Richard Maltby. See, for instance, Harvard University, "Youngest of the Arts Recognized by Oldest of American Universities" [press release], March 18, 1927; Colleges: Harvard: Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America Archive, Motion Picture Association of America, New York (hereafter cited as MPAA).

58. Most of the materials relied upon were industry publications, including in-house studio literature. Studios themselves were offered the authority to prescreen the lists and to provide other recommendations as well. J. W. D. Seymour, "Committee on the Choice of Film Report," June 29, 1927; Colleges: Harvard: MPAA; Will Hays to James Seymour, letter, May 12, 1927; Colleges, Harvard: MPAA; James Seymour to Carl Milliken, letter, 3 May 1927; Colleges: Harvard: MPAA).

59. MacDonald, "Film Library at Harvard," 357–59.

60. *Ibid.*, 360–61.

61. "Report on Film Library," n.d., RF RG 1.1, Series 200 R, Box 251, Folder 2996, RAC. This was likely a report issued in 1936 or 1937. For a scathing and

delicious critique of *Story of the Films*, see Harry Alan Potamkin, “The Story of Films” [book review], April 1928, in *The Compound Cinema: The Film Writings of Harry Alan Potamkin*, ed. Lewis Jacobs (New York: Teachers College Press, 1977), 534–35.

62. John Marshall to A. Conger Goodyear, letter, April 30, 1935, RF RD 4, Projects, Box 139, Folder 1367, RAC. Marshall reports that this was Abbott’s idea. Mary Pickford and Charlie Chaplin are named as potential members. There was no such magnanimous board established during these years.

63. John Abbott to Abby Rockefeller, memo, February 26, 1935, Museum of Modern Art Archives, Early Museum History: Museum Matters, Motion Picture Committee and Department, 1.7.12O.

64. The headlines read “Films Are Treated as Real Art by Lecturer at Metropolitan,” *New York Herald Tribune*, November 16, 1936. His lecture was accompanied by “old-time” films arranged by staff of the Film Library. For more on Panofsky and his relationship to film criticism and theory during the period, see T. Y. Levin, “Iconology at the Movies: Panofsky’s Film Theory,” *Yale Journal of Criticism* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 27–55.

65. “Meeting of Advisory Committee” [minutes], May 12, 1936 (RF RG 1.1, Series 200 R, Box 250, Folder 2984, RAC).

66. “Film Library Advisory Committee” [minutes], March 29, 1938, RF RG 1.1, Series 200 R, Box 250, Folder 2986, RAC.

67. Eventually, this project transformed into the March of Time newsreel *The Movies March On. Report on Film Library, 1939–40*, RF RG 1.1, Series 200 R, Box 251, Folder 2998, RAC. Several years later, two similar films were made through collaboration with MGM: *The Film That Was Lost* and *Forgotten Treasure*, part of John Nesbitt’s Passing Parade series; these are discussed in chapter 2. The Advisory Committee also discussed possible collaborations between MoMA and other film and museum organizations. In 1938, a joint plan with the SMPE and the Museum of Science and Industry to establish an exhibit of film technology was introduced. Proposals to make filmed stage plays more systematically available to college drama departments were also recommended. “Film Library Advisory Meeting Agenda,” RF RG 1.1, Series 200 R, Box 250, Folder 2985, RAC; see also John Abbott to Nelson Rockefeller, “Report,” June 1940, RF RG 4, Projects, Box 139, Folder 1367, RAC.

68. For information on Hays and the MPPDA contribution, see RF RG 1.1, Series 200 R, Box 251, Folder 2998, RAC; and Film Library, “Report on Film Library, 1939–40,” RF RG 1.1, Series 200 R, Box 250, Folder 2986, RAC.

69. Museum financial records indicate that the trip cost \$3,669.52 (a considerable fee, equivalent to \$48,522.14 in 2003). See Department of Film Financial Records (from J. Edward MacKermott & Company, March 4, 1939), 1, Department of Film Series, SC-FSC

70. Phil M. Daly, “Along the Rialto,” *Film Daily*, August 27, 1935, Film Library Scrapbooks, SC-FSC.

71. “Good Old Days,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 1, 1935, Film Library Scrapbooks, SC-FSC.

72. John Abbott, "Mr. Abbott's Talk at Mrs. Pratt's," November 26, 1935, Library of Congress Series, SC-FSC.

73. Barry, "Film Library, 1935–1941," 6. Wolheim had passed away four and a half years earlier, on February 18, 1931.

74. Barry, "The Film Library and How It Grew," 22.

75. Barry, "Pickfair Speech," August 22, 1935, Library of Congress Series, SC-FSC, 1.

76. Two successful such series were Flicker Frolics and Screen Souvenirs.

77. Barry, "Pickfair Speech," 1.

78. *Ibid.*, 2.

79. John Abbott, "Pickfair Speech," August 22, 1935, Library of Congress Series, SC-FSC, 3.

80. Barry, "Pickfair Speech," 3.

81. Abbott's speech was little different than Barry's. He similarly emphasized the noncommercial and educational aspects of the library's endeavor. When discussing the importance of saving a record of industry accomplishment, Abbott rather dramatically gestured toward the fragility of these films, cautioning against their disregard, as they could simply turn "into a handful of dust—and memories." (Abbott, "Pickfair Speech," 4).

82. *Tacoma Ledger*, August 21, 1935, MF5, 714; Louella O. Parsons, *Atlanta Georgian* (August 28, 1935) MF5, 710; Louella O. Parsons, *Los Angeles Examiner* (August 27, 1935) MF5, 701. These articles are part of the Public Information Records, microfilmed with the Archives of American Art series, held by the MoMA Archives.

83. "The Industry Supports a Library," *Los Angeles Post-Record*, August 27, 1935, MF5, 701; "Hollywood Votes for Library Aid," *Los Angeles Post-Record*, August 26, 1935, MF5, 701; "Hollywood Aid for Pic Museum Pledged," *Daily Variety*, August 26, 1935, MF5, 701; "Library Aid Pledged," *Hollywood Reporter*, August 26, 1935, MF5, 700. The preceding articles are part of the Public Information Records, microfilmed with the Archives of American Art series, held by the Museum of Modern Art Archives. See also "Library Gets Pledge of Industry's Aid," *Motion Picture Daily*, August 26, 1935, Film Library Scrapbooks, SC-FSC.

84. MoMA, press release, September 4, 1935, Museum of Modern Art Library, New York.

85. "More Trouble for Theatre Men Seen in 'Film Library' Set-Up," *Showmen's Trade Review*, June 29, 1935, Film Library Scrapbooks, Special Collections, Film Study Center, Department of Film and Media, Museum of Modern Art.

86. "Old Films for Archives," *Variety*, September 11, 1935, MoMA Archives, Public Information Records, MF5, 719.

87. "Get Film for Museum," *Motion Picture Daily*, September 23, 1935, MoMA Archives, Public Information Records, MF5, 719.

88. His evasiveness persisted despite a letter of introduction addressed to him, written by Whitney Barry, "The Film Library and How It Grew," 22.

89. Ibid.
90. There is an apocryphal story that circulates throughout secondary literature about some studio executives who sent large contributions to the museum during this period, stipulating that none of the money could be allocated to the Film Library.
91. "More Trouble for Theatre Men Seen in Film Library Setup."
92. "Rockefeller Family Grants Fund for a Motion Picture Museum," *Motion Picture Herald*, June 29, 1935, 17–18.
93. Barry, "Autobiographical Notes."
94. Reports vary on which lawyer said what when. According to one document submitted to the MPPDA, industry lawyer Gabriel Hess, together with Paramount's legal department and Austin Keough, penned the agreement. The Film Library would submit monthly reports listing prints in its possession, as well as the exhibition activities linked to those prints. See Barry, "The Case for the Museum of Modern Art Film Library," April 1948, Department of Film Series, SC-FSC, 19.
95. MoMA Film Library, "Film Library Report (1937)," 5.
96. Quoted in Barry, "Film Library, 1935–1941," 6. Griffith acquiesced shortly thereafter, reportedly at the bequest of Lillian Gish. It is worth noting that his change of heart coincided with his own dire financial situation.
97. Film Library press releases are held in the MoMA Library.
98. MoMA, "Mr. John Hay Whitney, President" [press release], October 9, 1935, MoMA Library.
99. MoMA, "Mr. John Hay Whitney, Chairman . . ." [press release], November 19, 1935, MoMA Library.
100. Samuel Goldwyn, quoted in *ibid.*
101. Barry, "So You Are in a Museum," *Screen Guild Magazine*, November 1936, Film Library Scrapbooks, SC-FSC. Virtually identical phrasing was used in a speech delivered by Abbott to the Society of Motion Picture Engineers; see Abbott, "Organization and Work of the Film Library," 295–99.
102. "Memo to MPPDA" attached to John Abbot to Nelson Rockefeller report, June 1940, RF RG 4, Projects, Box 139, Folder 1367, RAC.
103. Film Library Advisory Committee [minutes], March 29, 1938, RF RG 1.1, Series 200 R, Box 250, Folder 2986, RAC.
104. For complete program information, see "The Museum of Modern Art Film Library Presents a Program of Documentary Films" [program notes], May 10, 1936, Department of Film Series, SC-FSC.
105. See "Documentary Films Are Given Special Showing Here," *Washington Times*, May 11, 1936; "Distinguished Audience View Six New Documentary Films," *Washington Herald*, May 11, 1936; "Federal Officials to View Showing of Foreign Films," *Washington Herald*, May 6, 1936, Film Library Scrapbooks, SC-FSC.
106. Film Library Advisory Committee [minutes], May 12, 1936, RF RG 1.1, Series 200 R, Box 250, Folder 2984, RAC. Present at this meeting were Abbott, Barry, Charles Bonn (Eastman Kodak), A. Conger Goodyear, Stanton

Griffis, Erwin Panofsky, Hays, Nelson Rockefeller, Ed Warburg, and David Stevens.

107. Barry, "Why Wait for Posterity?" 133. In 1939, under instructions from Hays, the Motion Picture Association of America granted the Film Library \$33,333.33, which was made in four quarterly installments. Barry, *The Case for the Museum of Modern Art Film Library* [1948 for the Motion Picture Association of America], Department of Film Series, SC-FSC. The second contribution referred to by Barry is likely that made by Whitney as there is no record of another such donation. The industry gave two payments of \$16,666.00, one in 1939 and one in 1940. Iris Barry to Rockefeller Foundation, "Report," 1948, NAR RG 4, Series 111: 42, Box 139, Folder 1367, RAC.

108. Bill Buxton, "Reaching Human Minds: Rockefeller Philanthropy and Communications, 1935–39," in *The Development of the Social Sciences in the United States and Canada: The Role of Philanthropy*, ed. Theresa Richardson and Donald Fisher (Stamford, CT: Ablex, 1999), 177–92.

109. Quoted in *ibid.*, 180.

110. For an overview of the Rockefeller Foundation's activities vis-à-vis communications and media, see Brett Gary, *The Nervous Liberals: Propaganda Anxieties from World War I to the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

111. *Ibid.*, 109–14.

112. The foundation also supported film projects at Yale, the University of Minnesota, and elsewhere. Additionally, in April 1940, the Rockefeller Foundation granted the American Library Association \$5,500 to explore possibilities of film use by libraries. The results are published as Gerald Doan McDonald, *Educational Motion Pictures and Libraries* (New York: American Library Association, 1942). Additional film education projects were also funded by the Rockefeller General Education Board. These projects included healthy appropriations for the American Council of Education, the Progressive Education Association, and the Visual Education Unit of the University of Minnesota. See Buxton, "Reaching Human Minds," 184–85. Other philanthropies took an active interest in making cinema useful. For instance, the Carnegie Corporation also funded experiments in setting up cooperative film circuits to help libraries cost-effectively integrate films into their services. These projects began in 1948. For more on this, see Grace T. Stevenson, "Public Libraries," in *Sixty Years of 16mm Film, 1923–1983*, ed. Film Council of America (Evanston, IL: Film Council of America, 1954), 123–29.

113. The National Film Society (NFS) of Canada was established "to encourage and promote the study, appreciation and use of motion and sound pictures and television as educational and cultural factors in the Dominion of Canada and elsewhere." Quoted in Yvette Hackett, "National Film Society of Canada, 1935–1951: Its Origins and Development," in *Flashback: People and Institutions in Canadian Film History*, ed. Gene Walz (Montreal: Mediatexte, 1986), 138. The NFS was established as a national organization, and local chapters followed. The NFS is an example less of a series of local and organic initia-

tives than of the efforts of a few who presumed themselves worthy and capable of speaking to and thus defining national culture through film. The organization also received funding from the Carnegie Corporation. See Hackett, “National Film Society of Canada,” 135–65. See also Acland, “National Dreams, International Encounters.”

114. “RF Aid to the Museum of Modern Art Film Library, 1935–1949,” RF RG 1.1. Series 200 R, Box 251, Folder 2993, RAC.

115. John Marshall, inter-office correspondence, March 28, 1938, RF RG 1.1, Series 200 R, Box 251, Folder 2986, RAC.

116. These grants totaled approximately \$8,500. “RF Aid to the Museum of Modern Art Film Library, 1935–1949.”

117. Jay Leyda’s previous research in Moscow and his later work at the Film Library also resulted in the translation and publication of two of Sergei Eisenstein’s books, *The Film Sense* (1947) and *Film Form* (1949), published together as *Film Form and Film Sense*, ed. and trans. Jay Leyda (New York: Meridian Books, 1957). Also crucial was Leyda’s book *Kino: A History of the Russian Film* (New York: Allen and Unwin, 1960), which is dedicated to Barry and indebted to the Film Library’s resources, as well as a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. Pieces of it first appeared in the film notes generated for the Film Library’s traveling and in-house film programs. This grant was also brokered by Barry.

118. Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947). Kracauer received further grant money to write two reports on Nazi propaganda: *Propaganda and the Nazi War Film* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1942), and “The Conquest of Europe on the Screen: The Nazi Newsreel, 1939–1940,” a version of which is available in *Social Research* 10, no. 3 (1943): 337–57. This latter study was published partly because the research had captured the interest of Harold Laswell, then chief of the Library of Congress Experimental Division for the Study of War Time Communications.

119. A lecture he gave at the National Board of Review during his stay was published as Paul Rotha, “The Documentary Method in British Films,” *National Board of Review Magazine* 12 (November 1937): 3–9. His books up to the point of his visit included *The Film Till Now* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1930); *Celluloid: The Film Today* (London: Longman’s Green, 1931); *Documentary Film* (London: Faber and Faber, 1935); and *Movie Parade: A Pictorial Survey of Cinema* (London: Studio Publications, 1936). It is worth noting that Rotha was only twenty-three years old when he published his first sweeping overview of world cinema. He was just thirty when MoMA invited him to be a visiting scholar. It was his first book that proved so influential to Barr in his second major visit to Europe. Barr brought along a copy of Rotha’s tome as a guide for films he ought to see.

120. When I began this research, this appendix was not a part of the Film Department’s collection. Strangely, although the report itself is held in the Study Center’s Special Collections, this section is only available at the Rocke-



feller Foundation Archives. While it is difficult to know precisely why this is the case, it is tempting to speculate that it was not included in the report that was forwarded to museum trustees.

121. Marshall, "Inter-office Correspondence."

122. Ibid.

123. "The request to the Foundation is for general support, but it is recommended that the proposed grant of \$70,000 be made toward the expenses of maintaining and extending the Library's collections and of making its services available to educational organizations." "Grant Action," RF RG 1.1, Series 200 R, Box 250, Folder 2983, RAC.

124. Douglas Baxter, "A Report on the MoMA Film Library," 1940, RF RG 1.1, Series 200 R, Box 251, Folder 2998, RAC. A general lack of coordination plagued efforts at forging film art circuits throughout this period. For instance, the Film Department's records are filled with Barry's letters to various distributors, collectors, and exhibitors trying to track down prints for library programs.

#### CHAPTER 5. REARGUARD EXHIBITION

1. Lea Jacobs, "Reformers and Spectators: The Film Education Movement in the 30s," *Camera Obscura* 22 (January 1990): 29–49. For more on the film education movement, see Eric Smoodin, "'The Moral Part of the Story Was Great': Frank Capra and Film Education in the 1930s," *Velvet Light Trap* 42 (Fall 1998): 20–35; Anne Morey, *Hollywood Outsiders: The Adaptation of the Film Industry, 1913–1934* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003). For early concerns about the child audience, see Richard deCordova, "Ethnography and Exhibition: The Child Audience, the Hays Office and Saturday Matinees," *Camera Obscura* 23 (May 1990): 90–107; and Garth Jowett, Ian C. Jarvie, and Kathryn H. Fuller, eds., *Children and the Movies: Media Influence and the Payne Fund Controversy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

2. Miriam Hansen, *From Babel to Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

3. A version of this program was also given in April 1935 at Haverford College, at the bequest of the Film Society of Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges.

4. Of these, forty-five hundred were based in Canada. Museum of Modern Art Film Library, "Film Library Report (1937)," Department of Film Series, Special Collections, Film Study Center, Department of Film and Media, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 15. The Film Library was an important source for films in Canada, servicing an emergent film society movement there. For more on this, see Charles Acland, "National Dreams, International Encounters: The Formation of Canadian Film Culture in the 1930s," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 3, no. 1 (1994): 3–26.

5. During these first years the museum regularly included *Hands*, by Stella Simon (1928), and many of the now standard French and German experimen-

tals, such as *Ballet mécanique* (Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy, 1924), *Entr'acte* (René Clair, 1924), *Paris qui dort* (Clair, 1925), and *Berlin, Symphony of a Great City* (Walter Ruttmann, 1927). For a readily accessible but incomplete description of films included in these programs, see Eileen Bowser, ed., *Film Notes* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1969).

6. A third gallery exhibit was entitled *A Brief Survey of the American Film from 1895 to the Present Day*, composed mostly of stills. It was mounted in the summer of 1937 in the concourse level of Rockefeller Center, the museum's temporary galleries. All these exhibits were undertaken in 1937 or 1938.

7. A comprehensive list of Film Library programs can be found in the appendix to this book.

8. I have attributed this to the Lumières and assumed that it is the film now known as *Washing Day in Switzerland*. Strangely, the Film Library notes fail to supply any more specific information about this film other than its title and date.

9. Iris Barry, "The Clever Dummy" (1936), *A Short Survey of the Film in America: The Rise of the American Film, Series I, Program 2* [program notes], Department of Film Series, SC-FSC.

10. Iris Barry, "A Fool There Was" (1936), *A Short Survey of the Film in America: The Rise of the American Film, Series I, Program 2* [program notes], Department of Film Series, SC-FSC.

11. Iris Barry, "Shootin' Mad" (1936), *A Short Survey of the Film in America: The Development of the Narrative, Series I, Program 1* [program notes], Department of Film Series, SC-FSC.

12. The former of these units was categorized under the broader title of "Documentary Films" and also included a slow-motion study, footage of President McKinley's inauguration, and a newsreel of the assassination of King Alexander. The latter included *Tatters, a Tale of the Slums* (A. E. Coleby, 1911), von Sternberg's *Underworld* (1927), and *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1932).

13. Iris Barry, "The March of Time Vol. 1, No. 2" (1936), *Some Memorable American Films: The Film and Contemporary History, Series II, Program 3* [program notes], Department of Film Series, SC-FSC.

14. Iris Barry, "Cavalcade" (1936), *Some Memorable American Films: The Film and Contemporary History, Series II, Program 3*, [program notes], Department of Film Series, SC-FSC. Barry's notes on *Cavalcade* suggest a very different and considerably more generous approach to the film than she had taken only a couple of years earlier in her first film reviews for the museum's bulletin. Initially, she argued that the film was wholly derivative of stage conventions and contained no redeeming features to recommend it. For more on this, see chapter 4.

15. For more on Barry's criticism, see Haidee Wasson, "Writing the Cinema into Daily Life: Iris Barry and the Emergence of British Film Criticism in the 1920s," in *Young and Innocent? The Cinema in Britain, 1896–1930*, ed. Andrew Higson (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002), 321–37.

16. Sarah Newmeyer, "To Motion Picture Editors" [press release], January 4, 1936, Museum of Modern Art Library, New York.

17. Some of these press releases are signed by Sarah Newmeyer, the museum's in-house publicist, but others are not. Many are heavy with phrases and whole paragraphs culled directly from Iris Barry's reports.

18. Museum of Modern Art, "John E. Abbott, director" [press release], May 16, 1936, MoMA Library.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*, 2.

21. MoMA, "John Hay Whitney" [press release], n.d., MoMA Library, 2 (approximately September or October 1936).

22. Frank Capra, Anatole Litvak, and others used MoMA's collection to familiarize themselves with the newsreel and documentary tradition as preparation for making the *Why We Fight* series.

23. An internal report from 1937 asserted that the types of experience the museum should be working hardest to create were those most effectively elucidated through the medium of the moving picture, deemed superior to all other means. The report recommended that "experimental projects be undertaken at the earliest possible moment in order to establish the museums' leadership in this direction." Artemas Packard, *A Report on the Development of the Museum of Modern Art* (1937), MoMA Library, 29. For further discussion of this report, see chapter 3.

24. For an excellent discussion of the early relations among cinema and the natural history museum, see Alison Griffiths, *Wondrous Difference: Cinema, Anthropology, and Turn-of-the-Century Visual Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). For discussion about cinema and museums in general, see Alison Trope, "Mysteries of the Celluloid Museum: Showcasing the Art and Artifacts of Cinema" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1999).

25. MoMA Film Library, *16mm and 35mm Circulating Film Programs* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1944); see also MoMA Film Library, *Films of Fact* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1942).

26. Such entities satisfied the legal agreement arranged with studios. No other formal institutional affiliation was necessary. See, for example, MoMA Film Library, "Conditions of Rental," *Museum of Modern Art Film Library Bulletin*, 1940, 21–22.

27. I would like to acknowledge Dana Polan for his assistance with sorting through this generative moment in the early history of American film study. For more detailed examination of early cinema study in universities, see Dana Polan, "The Emergence of American Film Studies," in *In the Absence of Films*, ed. Jon Lewis and Eric Smoodin (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, forthcoming).

28. Film Library staff claimed success in catalyzing film societies in Buffalo, Los Angeles, and Washington and at Bryn Mawr, Haverford, Harvard, and Dartmouth, among others. *Museum of Modern Art Film Library Bulletin*, 1938–39, Department of Film Series, SC-FSC, 4.

29. Leyda also lectured at New York University during this period. For more on staff activity during this period, see MoMA Film Library, "Film Library Report (1937)," 34–35. See also chapter 4 of this book.

30. Douglas Baxter to John Marshall, "A Report on the MoMA Film Library," 1940, RF RG 1.1, Series 200 R, Box 251, Folder 2998, Rockefeller Archive Center, 18.

31. "General disinterest" was also cited as a fourth reason. Among those who were interested, a general lack of coordination plagued efforts at forging film art circuits throughout this period. *Ibid.* The film department's records are filled with Barry's letters to various distributors, collectors, and exhibitors trying to track down prints for library programs.

32. MoMA Film Library, "Cost of Circulating a 16mm Projector," in "Report on the Film Library," Appendix G, RF RG 1.1, Series 200 R, Box 251, Folder 2996, RAC. I have been unable to find evidence that this ever happened.

33. Costs for film rentals in 1937 were as follows: feature film in 16mm cost \$15 (the equivalent of approximately \$191 in 2003); feature film in 35mm, \$30 (\$382 in 2003); one installment of special programs in 16mm, \$10 (\$127 in 2003) and in 35mm, \$20 (\$255 in 2003); short subjects in 16mm, \$2 (\$25 in 2003); 35mm, \$4 (\$51 in 2003).

34. "Annual Report on the Film Library," 1939, Department of Film Series, SC-FSC.

35. Iris Barry to Rockefeller Foundation [report], March 1948, NAR RG 4, Series 111: 42, Box 139, Folder 1367, RAC.

36. See Iris Barry, "Film Library, 1935–1941," *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 8, no. 5 (1941): 3–13, esp. 10.

37. *L'Age d'Or* created a scandal when it was first released in 1930. Funded by the art patron Vicomte de Noailles and directed by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, the film depicts the decadence, hypocrisy, and repression of the French bourgeoisie. Its script was written collaboratively by a group of prominent surrealists, including Louis Aragon, André Breton, Dalí, Tristan Tzara, Paul Éluard, and others. The film was subsequently banned by French authorities after the theater in which it was showing was attacked by a group of right-wing objectors.

38. John Abbott to Abby Rockefeller, memo, June 7, 1935, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: Early Museum History: Museum Matters, Film Library Committee 1.7.121.

39. See "Cavalcade of Outstanding American Films," *Daily Worker*, May 26, 1939, Film Library Scrapbooks, SC-FSC.

40. The 1944–45 catalogue listed "German Propaganda Films, 1934–1940," and included titles such as *Triumph of the Will* (Leni Riefenstahl, 1934), *Baptism of Fire* (1940), and various newsreels. The catalogue also lists *Arsenal* (Aleksander Dovzhenko, 1928), *Chess Fever* (Vsevolod Pudovkin and Nikolai Shpikovskiy, 1925), *Chapayev* (Georgi Vasilyev and Sergei Vasilyev, 1934), and *Kino Pravda* (Dziga Vertov, 1925) under "The Russian Film." Pre- and postrevolutionary titles are registered.

41. By 1931, MoMA had contracted the services of a publicity agent and was reported to have been receiving more press coverage than any other art institution in the world. Russel Lynes, *Good Old Modern: An Intimate Portrait of the Museum of Modern Art* (New York: Atheneum, 1973), 126. For more detailed discussion of this, see chapter 3.

42. The Film Library, "Film Library Report (1937)," 28.

43. *Ibid.*, 36.

44. An excellent example of this mix of nostalgia and trivia can be found in the radio transcript of a show entitled "What's Art to Me?" aired December 2, 1939. The show featured Iris Barry and Holger Cahill, director of the Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration, rehearsing a dialogue about old films and celebrities of yesteryear. A background character in the scenario asks, "What have a lot of old movies got to do with modern art?" Cahill answers this question by stating that "movies are the liveliest, most popular, and most influential art of the twentieth century." Barry adds that rather than rare and precious things, the "great movies happen to have been highly popular as well." Iris Barry and Holger Cahill, "What's Art to Me?" CBS, New York, December 2, 1939, Department of Film Series, SC-FSC. Barry was extremely careful in particular contexts not to associate films with traditional but more populist conceptions of art, purposefully distancing the Film Library from a perceived elitism that was extended to it from the museum itself.

45. See Latrobe Carroll, "Where Do Movies Go from Here?" *American Girl*, November 1936, 5–10; Iris Barry, "Films for History," *Special Libraries* 30, no. 8 (October 1939): 258–60; "So Motion Picture Making Is an Art!" *Weekly Movie Guide*, *Parents' Magazine* 1, no. 3 (July 8, 1935); Eliot Ramsey, "A-Growin'," *Delineator*, 1937; Robert Stebbins, "The Movie: 1902–1917," *New Theatre*, March 1, 1936, 22–23; Sanderson Vanderville, "Theda Bara and Greta Garbo Show Movie Vampire Changes," *New York Daily Tribune*, March 3, 1936; Bruce Buttles, "Film of Auld Lang Syne," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 28, 1936, 5, 13; "New Home, Old Film" *Ambassador*, May 1939. These articles can be found in the Film Library Scrapbooks, SC-FSC.

46. Only several years later, in 1942, John Hay Whitney married Betsey Cushing Roosevelt, daughter-in-law to FDR and Eleanor Roosevelt.

47. Raymond Fielding, *The March of Time: 1935–1951* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 238. For more on the lineage of this film and the industry's role, see chapter 4.

48. See "The March of Time," Vertical Files, Film Study Center, Department of Film and Media, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

49. "Movies Museum Born, Harlow's Legs Immortal," *New York Telegraph*, June 26, 1935, Film Library Scrapbooks, SC-FSC.

50. Emily Grenauer, "A Museum of the Cinema," *World-Telegram*, June 27, 1935, Film Library Scrapbooks, SC-FSC.

51. *New York Sun*, June 28, 1935, Film Library Scrapbooks, SC-FSC. Other newspapers concurred: "A thesis on 'Two Gun Hicks' may in all proba-

bility win tomorrow's PhD quite as easily as a comparison of the timeless objectivity of Thoreau and Thomas Mann or a study of the life and times of Balzac." "College Students May Win Degrees for Research 'in Cinema,'" *New York World Telegram*, October 10, 1935. The *New York Sun* furthered this: "[The museum's programs are] almost certain to create higher standards, resulting even in what will be considered intellectual snobbishness, and eventually threaten to rob the rising generation of its gunmen and sex dramas." "Bumpkin Hollywood Turns Highbrow: Moving Pictures Will Be Collected as Cultural Records," *New York Sun*, September 7, 1935. The *New York Journal* chortled dismissively: "Now film will be collected as cultural records in the same manner as books. The *Covered Wagon* will stare just as arrogantly from the library shelf as William Shakespeare." *New York Journal*, September 7, 1935; see also "A Mongrel Discovers It Has a Pedigree—Some Serious Thoughts on the Cinema" *Brooklyn Eagle*, July 21, 1935, Film Library Scrapbooks, SC-FSC.

52. Such critics include Seymour Stern, Gilbert Seldes, Ralph Block, Alfred Kuttner, and Herman Weinberg. For a useful overview of American film criticism during this period, see Myron Osborn Lounsbury, *The Origins of American Film Criticism, 1909–1939* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), 150–95.

53. *Battleship Potemkin* premiered in New York in 1926. Reviews or articles about the film appeared in *Photoplay Magazine*, *National Board of Review Magazine*, the *New Yorker*, the *New York Times*, the *New York Herald Tribune*, and elsewhere. These articles have been collected and published as Herbert Marshall, ed., *The Battleship Potemkin* (New York: Avon, 1978). For a thoughtful examination of the American and international exhibition, reception, and revival of *Caligari* and its importance for the formation of alternative or art cinemas, see Kristin Thompson, "Dr. Caligari at the Folies-Bergère, or The Successes of an Early Avant-Garde Film," in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari: Texts, Contexts, Histories*, ed. Mike Budd (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 121–70.

54. Lounsbury, *Origins of American Film Criticism*, 159.

55. See, for example, "Films Reborn," *Literary Digest*, March 1936; Katherine Hill, "Ancient Thrillers of the Cinema Museum Affording Cheerful Entertainment," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 29, 1936; "Relics Acquired by New Film Library," *Hollywood Reporter*, July 11, 1935; "Film Library Embalms Hot 'Gay 90's' Kiss," *New York Evening Journal*, July 11, 1935; "Rare Old Products of an Early Day in the Cinema Acquired by Library," *Washington Post*, July 21, 1935. All these articles can be found in the Film Library Scrapbooks, SC-FSC.

56. "Asylum for Negatives," *World Film News and Television Progress* 1, no. 1 (1936): 3; William Troy, "Films: The Film Library," *Nation*, July 24, 1935, 112.

57. Frank Nugent, "Comedy of Eras," *New York Times*, January 8, 1936; Hill, "Ancient Thrillers of the Cinema Museum."

58. Leo Mishkin, "Screen Presents: Film Library Museum Established a Tradition and Heritage for Movies," *New York Telegraph*, January 9, 1936, Film Library Scrapbooks, SC-FSC.

59. Virginia Boren, "Glancing Backward with the Movies," *Seattle Daily Times*, January 21, 1936, Film Library Scrapbooks, SC-FSC.

60. Gilbert Seldes, "True to Type: Old Movies," *New York Journal*, September 25, 1935, Film Library Scrapbooks, SC-FSC. See also "Shocking Idea for Hollywood," *Esquire*, August 1940; "Majority and Minority Audiences," *National Board of Review Magazine* 13, no. 2 (February 1938): 9–12. On the pages of the *Nation*, Mark Van Doren also argued for the value of revivals, thus allowing adequate assessment of what the "form of the movie is." See Mark Van Doren, "Films: German Revival," *Nation*, February 27, 1937, 251.

61. Herman Weinberg, "Evolution of the Cinema," *New York Times*, July 18, 1937, sec. X, p. 4.

62. Stebbins, "The Movie," 22.

63. Frank Leyendecker, "Public's Craze for 'Meller-Drammer' of Early Movie Era Spreading Rapidly: Museum of Modern Art Credited with Starting Revival of Tear-jerkers and Comedy Pictures of Custard-Pie by Theatres in the East," *Box Office*, August 1, 1936, Film Library Scrapbooks, SC-FSC; "Freak Demand for Silents," *Variety*, March 17, 1937, Film Library Scrapbooks, Special Collections, Film Study Center, Museum of Modern Art; Amy Gage, "Old-Time Movies Are the Newest Film Fashion," *Baltimore Evening Sun*, September 1, 1936, Film Library Scrapbooks, SC-FSC.

64. *Ibid.*

65. Inge Benson, "A Boom in Pioneer Silent Films," *New York Herald Tribune*, October 20, 1940, Film Library Scrapbooks, SC-FSC.

66. Dorothy T. Stone, "The First Film Library," *Films in Review* 11, no. 7 (1951): 35.

67. "Freak Demand for Silents," n.p.

68. Iris Barry, "The Film Library," *Delineator*, 1937, Film Library Scrapbooks, SC-FSC.

69. MoMA, *Annual Report to Trustees and the Corporation Members of the Museum of Modern Art June 30, 1939–July 1, 1940* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1940), 14.

70. In 1939, it cost \$.25 to be admitted to the museum during the week, or the equivalent of \$3.31 in 2003. The charge was \$.10 on Sunday. As a point of comparison, the average movie ticket in 1935 cost \$.13 (\$1.74 in 2003). Richard Butsch, "Table A.2: Movie Admission, Radio, and Television Set Retail Prices," in *The Making of American Audiences: From Stage to Television, 1750–1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 300.

71. MoMA, "Museum of Modern Art Continues Film Cycle" [press release], September 26, 1939, MoMA Library. In October 1939, a second showing was added. Rather than one showing at 4:30, two showings were conducted daily, one at 3:00 and another at 5:30 that was billed as an added showing for

“business people.” This change indicates the beginning of efforts to expand the museum’s audience by attracting evening museumgoers as well. This was also likely part of the museum’s ongoing attempt to increase the number of men who attended exhibits. For more on this, see Packard, *Report*.

72. MoMA, “Record-Breaking Attendance at New Home of Museum of Modern Art” [press release], June 6, 1939, MoMA Library.

73. John Abbott to Rockefeller Foundation, “Report on Activities,” 15 June 1939, RF RG 1.1, Series 200 R, Box 251, Folder 2998, RAC.

74. MoMA, “Largest Library in Country Devoted Exclusively to Modern Art Opened to Public” [press release], October 28, 1939, MoMA Library. This release detailed an outline of a new museum library, which included the study resources of the Film Library. It announced “almost 1500 titles of books and pamphlets in every major language, 50 film journals, including technical, trade and fan magazines.” It also documented holdings of early Biograph and Griffith material, a large collection of film stills, and items related to the estate of Douglas Fairbanks. Russian and French books, pamphlets, and theoretical and critical writings were also featured.

75. The Griffith acquisition coincided with his disastrous financial situation. It is highly likely that he simply could not afford to pay for the storage of his films and related materials. Barry amusingly notes in autobiographical notes that at the time of his donation “he [Griffith] could only enter Manhattan after sundown—debts and processes, endless legal tangles menaced him.” He reportedly attended the opening of the van Gogh show in 1935. Barry proudly introduced him to Nelson Rockefeller. She recalled: “Griffith reared back a little and said, affably enough: ‘Ah, young Rockefeller, eh? I knew your grandfather. There was a son of a bitch.’ The floor did not open though I wished it would. Nelson took it well; a rapier thrust from a distinguished elderly fencing opponent and replied, smiling ‘Yes, he was a tough one.’” Iris Barry, “Autobiographical Notes” (n.d.), Iris Barry Collection, Department of Film Series, SC-FSC. The Fairbanks acquisition occurred just before his death. The show, curated by Alistair Cooke, marks what is likely the first and most elaborate star study held by such an institution. Most interesting is that the show itself was billed that way, as well as for its range of film types. “For the first time in movie history, the whole career of a famous screen star will be put on view to the general public. . . . The public can enjoy the experience which is new to moviegoing, of seeing the continuous development of a personal style of film comedy and in the process follow the technical development of movie-making from 1915–1932.” MoMA, “Film Library to Screen Unique Film Cycle” [press release], April 30, 1940, MoMA Library.

76. MoMA, “Museum Audiences Cheer Fairbanks Films” [press release], June 20, 1940, MoMA Library.

77. *Ibid.*

78. MoMA, “Forty Years of American Film Comedy from Flora Finch and John Bunny to Chaplin, Fields, Benchley and the Marx Brothers to Be



Shown at the Museum of Modern Art" [press release], July 18, 1940, MoMA Library.

79. In September 1940, the Fairbanks retrospective was reported to be "the most significantly popular of all the Film Library's series." John Abbott, "Films in Retrospect," *New York Herald Tribune*, September 16, 1940, Film Library Scrapbooks, SC-FSC.

80. Great Actresses of the Past "has aroused so much interest not only among museum visitors but particularly among theater people and drama students that it will be shown every day at 4 P.M." The release lists stage celebrities who have already seen the anthology, including Tallulah Bankhead and Frances Farmer. "The films are noteworthy less as examples of motion picture history than as records of the performances of these four great actresses. In a sense the motion pictures are even unkind to all of these famous women, so distinguished in their own medium of the stage." [Press release], January 14, 1939, MoMA Library.

81. These issues are also discussed at greater length in chapter 4.

82. B. G. Braver-Mann, "A Letter to Ye Editor," *New York Times*, July 9, 1939, 114.

83. He continued: "Only one conclusion is possible, i.e., that the Film Library is serving as an instrument for the perpetration not of a genuine film culture based on a serious approach to the medium but merely of the nickelodeon and show-business 'culture,' which still operates as the fundamental and sole motivating force behind the streamlined façade of modern Hollywood." *Ibid.*

84. For scattered references to film programming during this period, see the Department of Film Exhibition Series, SC-FSC.

85. Seymour Stern accused Leyda and MoMA of spreading Stalinist propaganda by showing films made under the Stalinist regime and by accompanying these films with distorted notes that downplayed the military actions taken against the Ukraine after the Bolshevik revolution. Stern cleverly hedged his bets about responsibility for the "travesties" and "perversions of the truth," suggesting that it may not be only Mr. Leyda but the Film Library itself that was seeking to send out "political propaganda" and "typical Communist Party misinterpretation of history in the guise of 'scientific' program notes." See Seymour Stern, "Film Library Notes Build 'CP Liberators' Myth," *New Leader*, March 23, 1940, Film Library Scrapbooks, Special Collections, Film Study Center, Department of Film and Media, Museum of Modern Art. See also an article on Leyda in *New Leader*, May 11, 1940, wherein Stern attacked Leyda's training in Moscow as grounds for further supporting his claims that Leyda is insufficiently objective. Stern campaigned actively against Leyda and the Film Library's handling of Soviet films, claiming in a letter to Nelson Rockefeller that he is anything but a "red-baiter." Rather, he claimed concern for the Film Library and its possible use for political rather than artistic reasons. Seymour Stern to Nelson Rockefeller, letter, March 30, 1940, RF RG 4, Projects, Box 139, Folder 1367, RAC. See also Leyda's memo to Barry defending him-

self, May 29, 1940, RF RG 4: Projects, Box 139, Folder 1367, RAC. As a result of these polemics, Leyda was forced to resign.

86. See particular letters by B. G. Braver-Mann (“Letter to Ye Editor”) and Kirk Bond, who sent a series of letters to Rockefeller complaining about the lack of seriousness with which films were treated at the museum, claiming that the programs “are poorly selected, poorly arranged, the prints are shown with a careless indifference to original form, with unannounced cuts, altered titles, unexcused tinting, too-rapid projection.” Bond also describes the program notes as being “pretentious without being either clear or critical.” He singled out the library’s cuts to *Intolerance* as, well, intolerable. These letters are held by the Rockefeller Archive Center, RF RG 4, Projects, Box 139, Folder 1367.

87. Griffith concluded the letter with the suggestion that rather than Barry, his brother, Albert Griffith Grey, curate the show and that Seymour Stern write the film notes. He suggested that if this could not be arranged he would prefer that his films not be shown at all. He finished the letter: “Sorry to make all this trouble for you but you are young, good looking and have all that dough and on the other hand, I am an old and fading weed and don’t want to work no more. So, on the whole, I think it is only right that I should give you at least a little trouble.” He signed the letter “most insincerely yours.” D. W. Griffith to Nelson Rockefeller, letter, August 27, 1940, RF RG 4, Projects, Box 139, Folder 1367, RAC.

88. Iris Barry, *D. W. Griffith, American Film Master* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1940).

89. Alistair Cooke to Iris Barry “Report on the Film Library,” March 27, 1940, Archive Series, SC, FSC, 10–11. Cooke himself suggested that the Film Library should not shy away from its commitments to popular film and that it should seek to distinguish itself from general museum practice by better balancing its general-interest (popular) shows with its special theme shows (code for non-American). He wrote: “We are primarily historians of a popular art, as we must not shrink from any connotation of the word ‘popular’ . . . and we must work hard to avoid ‘cultural superiority’ and ‘cultural snobbery’” (14). Importantly, while there is no evidence to suggest that Barry would disagree with this, Cooke’s report points clearly to the existence of disagreement among library staff about how it should define and orchestrate its project.

90. MoMA Film Library, “Work and Progress” [pamphlet], January 1937, MoMA Film Library, 3.

91. Rockefeller Foundation, “Film Library Report,” n.d., RF RG 1.1, Series 200 R, Box 251, Folder 2986, RAC, 1.

## CHAPTER 6. ENDURING LEGACIES

1. Russel Lynes, *The Tastemakers: The Shaping of American Popular Taste* (New York: Harper, 1954), 26–27.

2. For a new translation of Benjamin’s classic essay, see “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility,” in *Walter Benjamin: Selected*

*Writings*, vol. 3, 1935–1938, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Howard Eiland, and others (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2002), 101–33.

3. Miriam Bratu Hansen, “America, Paris, the Alps: Kracauer (and Benjamin) on Cinema and Modernity,” in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, ed. Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 365–66.

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# Index

Page numbers in *italics> indicate figures.*

- Abbott, Jere, 102, 125  
Abbott, John E., 21, 107, 114, 245n69;  
and film acquisitions in Europe,  
115–17, 116; and Pickfair event,  
130–38, 131  
Abel, Richard, 41  
Academy of Motion Picture Arts and  
Sciences (AMPAS), 11, 215n29,  
232n74; and film studies, 54–55;  
and MoMA Film Library, 169  
Adam, T. R., 83–84  
*Adventures of Tom Sawyer, The*  
(1938), 124, 153  
*Africa Speaks* (1930), 106  
*Âge d'Or, L'* (1930), 61, 168  
Alexandrov, G. Y., 168  
*All Quiet on the Western Front*  
(1930), 132, 138  
Amateur Cinema League, 63; activi-  
ties, 64–65; film library, 63–64; “10  
Best” list, 63  
*Amateur Movie Makers*, 14, 64. See  
also *Movie Makers*  
*Ambassador*, 169  
Ambrosio, Arturo, 179  
American Association for Adult Edu-  
cation, 83  
American Association of Museums,  
119  
American Civic Association, 13  
American Civil Liberties Union, 119  
American Council on Education, 52  
American culture, social and techno-  
logical changes in, 8  
American Federation of Women’s  
Clubs, 119  
American Film Center (AFC), 143  
American Film Institute (AFI), 25,  
192  
*American Girl*, 169  
American Legion, 13  
American Library Association, 119,  
140  
American Museum of Natural History  
(AMNH), 45, 80, 86; auditorium,  
154; and film and exhibit circula-  
tion, 79–80; and film library, 79; and  
lantern slides, 79; and MoMA Film  
Library, 153; and radio broadcasts,  
86; and 16mm, 79; and 35mm, 79  
American Museum of Natural History  
Library, 45  
Anderson, “Broncho Billy,” 132, 158  
Andrews, Roy Chapman, 86  
*Anémic Cinéma* (1926), 61  
*Angels with Dirty Faces* (1938), 157  
Anthology Film Archives, 192  
Armory Show (1913), 75, 88  
Arnheim, Rudolph, 13; and film stud-  
ies, 53  
Arnold, Matthew 76  
*Arrangement in Gray and Black No. 1*  
(*Whistler’s Mother*), 185  
*Arsenal* (1928), 168

- art: academic study of, 86; audience for, 2; and culture, 27–28; and social reform, 75–77; reproducibility of, 68, 71, 72
- art cinema, 26; early institutions of, 6; history and examples of, 221n57; modes of production, distribution, and exhibition, 27
- art films, viewing of, 1–2
- Art Institute of Chicago, 114
- Art News*, 75
- art reproductions, 185, 247n84
- Arts*, 75
- Arts and Decoration*, 14, 75
- Association of School Film Libraries, 52, 231n61
- Astaire, Fred, 124
- Atomement of Goesta Berling* (1923), 157
- At the Crossroads of Life* (1908), 185
- Austin, Everett, Jr., 107, 251n120
- avant-garde, 72–74; and American filmmaking, 63
- Balio, Tino, 37
- Ballet Mécanique* (1924), 61, 157
- Bara, Theda, 158, 176
- Barr, Alfred, 107, 125, 247n82; and Bauhaus, 88, 101; and cine clubs and film societies, 101, 188; critics of, 249n103; as director of MoMA, 69, 88–91, 101–3; and education, 87, 88, 94; and Sergei Eisenstein, 101–2; and Eurocentrism, 101; and mass museology, 94; and media technologies, 101; and modernism, 101; and MoMA history, 88; and new techniques of display, 94; and popular culture, 87; and study of art history, 86–87; travel to Europe, 101; and *Vanity Fair's* "A Modern Art Questionnaire," 88
- Barry, Iris, 21, 116, 131, 142, 143, 103, 232n70; as cinephile, 110; criticism of, 181; and Daily Mail, 103; dating of films, 20; and D. W. Griffith, 181; and film acquisitions in Europe, 115–17; and film as historical document, 158–59; and Film Society (London), 103; and Film Society (New York), 41; and film study, 119, 164; film reviews of, 103–4; as first curator of MoMA Film Library, 2, 110; and Hollywood films, 110; and Pickfair event, 130–38; and purpose of MoMA Film Library, 139, 193; and *Spectator*, 103; taste in films, 249–50n106
- Barrymore, Lionel, 132
- Bateson, Gregory, 143
- Battleship Potemkin, The* (1925), 102, 152, 168, 172, 211n14
- Bauhaus, 87, 89
- Baxter, Douglas, 145
- Bayer, Herbert, 87
- Bell and Howell, 46–47
- Benchley, Robert, 179
- Benjamin, Walter, 32, 71, 185
- Bennett, Tony, 8
- Benson, Inge, 175
- Bernhardt, Sarah, 173, 176, 179
- Birth of a Nation, The* (1915), 132, 152
- Blackburn, Alan, 125
- Black Pirate, The* (1926), 178
- Bliss, Lillie P., 88, 106
- Blockbuster Video, 192
- Boese, Carl, 117
- Bohnenberg, Carl, 5
- Bonn, Charles, 130
- Book of the Month Club, 72
- Boren, Virginia, 173
- Boston Museum of Fine Arts, 77
- Boston Transcript*, 128
- Bourdieu, Pierre, 27; and museum studies, 70–71
- Boy Scouts of America: and museums, 77; film reviews and evaluations, 13
- Brabin, Charles, 179
- Brancusi, Constantin, 61
- Brandon, Tom, 42, 63
- Braver-Mann, B. G., 180
- Breen, Joseph, 11, 218n42
- Breuer, Marcel, 89

- British Film Institute, 6, 114; National Film Library, 115
- Browning, Tod, 157
- Brown University, 164
- Brulatour, Jules, 129
- Bryn Mawr College, 114, 164
- Buffalo Courier Express*, 85
- Buñuel, Louis, 61, 113, 117, 163; at MoMA Film Library, 118, 181
- Bush, Steven, 10
- Butler, David, 170
- Butler, Nicholas Murray, 231n66
- Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, The* (1919), 117, 157, 171, 211n14
- cable, 36
- Cagney, James, 119
- Calmettes, André, 179
- Cameo (movie theater), 225n16
- Camera Goes Along, The* (1936), 163
- Camille* (1912), 179
- Campigli, 61
- Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau, 79
- Canudo, Riccioto, 41
- Capra, Frank, 179
- Carnegie Foundation: and adult education, 83; philanthropic activities of, 82
- Carnegie Library, 144
- Cavalcade* (1933), 104, 158
- Cavalcanti, Alberto, 163
- CBS, 92
- CBS School of the Air*, 86
- Cenere* (1916), 179
- Century*, 14
- Chalmers, Thomas, 138, 157
- Chaplin, Charlie, 121, 126, 131, 179; films at MoMA Film Library, 22
- Chicago Daily News*, 14–15
- Chicago Examiner*, 14
- Chicago, University of, 164; and audiovisual lending libraries, 52
- Christian Science Monitor*, 169
- Chronicles of America, The*, 230n60. *See also* Metropolitan Museum of Art; Yale University
- cine clubs, 34, 41. *See also* film clubs
- cinema: anxieties about, 8; purpose and utility of, 9; standardization and regulation of, 9; transformation of, 2–3
- cinema of attractions, 219n49
- Cinema Quarterly*, 14, 58; and British documentary movement, 59
- Cinema 16, 192
- Cinémathèque Française, 115, 252n13
- cinematic learning, 34
- Clair, René, 117, 126, 157
- Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 14
- Clever Dummy* (1917), 156, 158
- Close Up*, 14, 59
- Club des Amis du Septième Art, Le (CASA), 41
- Cohn, Harry, 131
- Colgate University, 164
- College Affairs Committee (CAC), 55
- Colour Box, The* (1935), 117, 140
- Columbia Pictures, 52; nontheatrical division, 51
- Columbia University, 164; and film studies, 53–54, 119, 231n66
- Coming of Columbus, The* (1912), 132
- Communist Party, 62, 90
- Connecticut Yankee, A* (1931), 170
- Constructivism, 74–75
- Cooke, Alistair, 118, 182
- Cooper, Merriam C., 157; and Pickfair event, 130
- Cooper Union, 119
- Copernicus, Nicolaus, 84
- Cornell University, 164
- Covered Wagon, The* (1923), 138, 157, 176
- Coward, Noël, 104
- Crawford, Joan, 143
- Crosland, Alan, 138, 156
- Crowninshield, Frank, 92
- Cruze, James, 138, 157, 176
- cultural value: and cultural institutions, 76; definitions of, 75; high, low, and middlebrow, 71–73, 171, 185; increase and decrease of, 185; politics of, 76; and television, 71
- cummings, e. e., 41

- Dada, 74–75  
*Daily Mail* (London), 103  
*Daily News* (Chicago), 85  
 Dale, Arthur, 57  
 Dalí, Salvador, 61, 84, 117; paintings and films of, 17  
 D'Amico, Victor, 96  
*Dangerous* (1935), 170  
 Dartmouth College, 164  
 Dartmouth Film Society, 165  
 Darwin, Charles, 84  
 Daughters of the American Revolution, 140  
*Delineator*, 169  
 DeLuxe Laboratories, 137  
 DeMille, Cecil B., 128; and film studies, 55  
 Desfontaines, Henri, 173  
 DeVry, H. A., 50  
 DeVry Corporation, 50  
 Dewey, John, 100; and art education, 82–83; and film education, 55  
*Dial*, 14, 75, 87  
 Disney, Walt, 92, 126, 156; animated shorts, 42; and Pickfair event, 130, 138  
*Doctor Bull*, 250n109  
*Doctor's Secret, The* (1900), 157  
 Dos Passos, John, 41  
 Dovzhenko, Alexander, 168  
 Dreier, Katherine, 75  
*Dreigroschenoper (Threepenny Opera)* (1931), 61  
 Dréville, Jean, 140  
 Dreyer, Carl-Theodor, 106, 157, 170  
 Duchamp, Marcel, 61, 75  
 Dulac, Germaine, 117, 157  
 Dupont, Ewald, 117  
 Duse, Eleonora, 179  
 DVD format, 5, 36, 191
- Earhart, Amelia, 100  
 Eastman, George, 50  
 Eastman Kodak, 10, 46–47, 129, 137, 229n52; and celluloid, 47  
 Edison, 10  
 Edison, Thomas, 3, 50, 132, 155–56
- educational films: production of, 230n60; study of, 35, 55. *See also* Museum of Modern Art Film Library; and education  
*Educational Screen*, 14, 55  
 Educational Services Department, 51  
 Eisenstein, Sergei, 25, 101, 104, 117, 121, 126, 168, 171, 211n14; and film discourse, 13; films at MoMA Film Library, 22  
 Encyclopedia Britannica, 49  
*End of St. Petersburg* (1927), 102  
 Epstein, Jean, 117; and film discourse, 13  
 Ernst, Max, 61  
*Étoile de Mer, L'*, (1928), 61, 117  
 Eurocentrism in American culture, 76  
*Exceptional Photoplays*, 39  
*Execution of Mary Queen of Scots* (1895), 155–56  
*Experimental Cinema*, 14, 114
- Face of Britain, The* (1935), 140  
 Fairbanks, Douglas, 130, 177  
 Fairfax-Jones, J. S., Esq., 117  
*Fall of the House of Usher, The* (1928), 63, 117  
 Famous Players–Lasky, 53  
*Fantômas* (1913), 117  
*Faust* (1910), 156, 171  
*Faust* (1926), 117  
 Federation Internationale des Archives du Film (FIAF), 25, 115; founding of, 125  
 Feuillade, Louis, 117, 157  
 Field, Marshall, 92; department store, 87, 92  
 Fields, W. C., 179  
 Fieninger, Lyonel, 87  
 film: archiving and exhibiting, 3, 4; availability of, 193; as business, 7, 11; categorizing, 13; changing viewing sensibilities, 7; in churches and national organizations, 9; control of production and exhibition, 12; and current events, 14; discourses, 19;

- and education, 50, 55–56, 78, 214n26; foreign, 15; historical, 173; in libraries, 9, 214n26; as mass entertainment, 8, 65; and multimediated culture, 18–19; in museums, 241n27; as object, 7, 8, 28; as permanent record, 32, 60; and politics, 9–11, 14; preservation of, 3–4; prints rental, 8; recycling, 3; repeat viewing, 8; reproducibility of, 7–8; in schools, 50–51, 56, 214n26, 230n59; shorts, 22; silent, 132–33; as technological artifact, 78; in universities, 231–32n66
- film appreciation, 56–58
- film archives, 34, 215n30, 253n15; as cinematic institution, 6. *See also* Museum of Modern Art Film Library: collecting and cataloguing films
- Film Art*, 14, 25
- film art: concepts of, 5, 25–28, 211n57, 251n120; aesthetic qualities of, 211n57; and ethnocentrism, 26; and film societies, 44, 188; history of, 211n57; and 16mm technology, 58. *See also* Museum of Modern Art Film Library: and film art
- film as university, 10
- film audience, 5, 34, 65–66. *See also* Museum of Modern Art Film Library: and audience
- Film Booking Offices, 128
- film clubs, 34
- film communities, 41–43
- film criticism, 14–15
- film culture, 58; definitions of, 15; film qua film, 6; and home entertainment, 18–19; and modes of exhibition, 18, 37; and new technologies, 18, 37, 58; specialized, 6, 65
- Film Daily Yearbook, The*, 37
- film distribution, 37
- film education, 34, 53–58; movement, 57, 65. *See also* film studies
- film exhibition, 35–36, 37, 38, 66, 170; and amateur filmmaking, 64; and cultural life, 18, 34; double-feature format, 170; modes of, 18, 34, 36, 46, 64; nontheatrical, 35–37, 39, 44, 64, 188; and 16mm, 44, 46, 48, 66; technologies of, 7, 18, 19, 35–37, 45–48; television, 44; theatrical, 35–37, 39, 44, 48, 192. *See also* film technology; movie theaters; Museum of Modern Art Film Library: film exhibition
- film festivals, 192
- Film Forum, 42
- Filmfront*, 14
- film gauges, 36, 44, 65; substandard (non-35mm), 59. *See also* film technology; 16mm; 35mm
- film history, concept of, 5, 37
- film industry, 214n25; associations, 11; attacks on, 9, 11; and copyrights, 111; and educational film, 10, 51; and film art, 111; and film categorizing, 13; and film culture, 15–16; and film in schools, 50; and film preservation, 128; and Harvard Film Library project, 128; as “low-brow,” 128; and MoMA Film Library, 16, 111, 127–29; and public perceptions, 10; public sentiment against, 15; self-preservation, 11, 129; and status of cinema, 11; strategies of, 9–10; as vertically integrated system, 15. *See also* Hollywood
- film journals, 14
- film libraries, 34, 52, 61, 188, 228n40; annual subscriptions, 48; exhibitions at, 49; and films as education, 50; film exchanges, hire, and rentals, 48–49; and 16mm technology, 60–61. *See also* Museum of Modern Art Film Library
- Film Library (MoMA). *See* Museum of Modern Art Film Library
- filmmaking, amateur, 63–64
- film practice, 37
- film production, 37
- film projectors, 48; nontheatrical, 36, 49; portable, 44, 49; self-operated,



- film projectors (*continued*)  
 46; sound-on-film 16mm, 47. *See also* film technology
- film publications, 13–14. *See also* Museum of Modern Art Film Library: publications of
- film reception, 35
- Films*, 14, 126
- films, old, 174–75
- film series, 153–59, 162, 170, 175
- film societies, 6, 7, 41–44, 188; and film technologies, 44; growth of, 45
- Film Society (New York), 41–42, 61
- Film Society (London), 41, 103, 114
- Film Spectator*, 14
- film studies, 44, 52–54, 66, 215n29; and Great Books programs, 53
- film studios, 5
- film technology: acetate film (Pathé), 47; Ciné-Kodak camera, 46–47; continuous sound-reduction printer, 47; film format conversions, 47; digital, 188; 8mm, 36; Kodascope projector, 46; laser disc, 192; 9.5mm standard format (Pathé Baby), 46–47; nitrate film, 47; Pathéscope, 47; safety-reversal stock, 46–47; 16mm, 36, 44–47; sound-on-film projector, 47–48; synchronized sound, 37; 35mm, 36. *See also* film projectors
- Film That Was Lost, The*, 223n1
- film viewing, 65
- Fiske, Minnie, 179
- Flaherty, Robert, 126
- Flore, John, 63
- Fogg Art Museum, 11, 127–29
- Foolish Wives* (1921), 152
- Fool There Was, A* (1915), 156, 158
- Ford, Edsel, 92, 244n62
- Ford, Henry, 44, 92
- Ford, John, 170, 250n109
- foreign-language theaters, 211n14
- Forman, Henry James, 232n75
- Fortune*, 92
- Foucault, Michel, 70
- 4-H Clubs, 77
- Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1921), 157
- Fox. *See* Twentieth Century–Fox
- Fox, William, 128
- Freeburg, Victor, 53
- Freeman*, 75
- French State Railways, 140
- Freshman, The* (1925), 157
- From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of German Film*, 145
- Futter, Walter, 106
- Gale, Arthur, 63
- Gallery 291, 75
- gangster films, 157
- Garrison Films, 63
- Gary, Brett, 144
- General, The* (1926), 157
- General Education Board, 144, 235n86; funding of Association of School Film Libraries, 52
- General Line, The* (1929), 102
- George Eastman House, 25, 192
- Gershwin, George, 41
- Gibbons, Cedric, 103
- Gillett, Burt, 103
- Girl Scouts of America: *American Girl* magazine, 169; and educational films, 12; and museums, 77
- Gish, Lillian, 132
- Godard, Jean-Luc, 25
- Goebbels, Joseph, 101–3
- Gold Rush, The* (1925), 131
- Goldwyn, Samuel, 138; and Pickfair event, 130, 131, 138
- Golem, The* (1920), 117, 157
- Gomery, Douglas, 40
- Goodwyn, Philip, 97
- Gordon, Flash, 178
- Gould, Symon, 225n16
- Grand Illusion* (1937), 211n14
- Grass* (1925), 157
- Great Depression: effects of, 37; and museums, 81
- Great Train Robbery, The* (1903), 132, 156
- Greed* (1924), 17, 157

- Green, Alfred, 170  
 Grenauer, Emily, 171  
 Grierson, John, 58; and documentary cinema, 143  
 Griffis, Stanton, 129  
 Griffith, D. W., 25, 41, 121, 132, 152, 156; argument against Barry, 181  
 Griffith, Richard, 118  
 Gropius, Walter, 89  
 Gunning, Tom, 23
- Hamilton, James Shelley, 41  
 Hand, David, 132  
*Hands* (1928), 156  
 Hansen, Miriam, 15, 151, 190  
*Harper's*, 14  
 Hart, William S., 157  
 Harvard Business School, 11, 128  
 Harvard Film Foundation, 114  
 Harvard Film Library, 128; and film industry, 128  
 Harvard University, 231n60; and art history, 86; and audiovisual lending libraries, 52; Department of Fine Arts, 127; film archive, 127–28; and film studies, 54  
 Haverford College, 114  
 Hayakawa, Sessue, 176  
 Hays, Will, 11, 51, 111, 127–28, 215n30, 231n66; and Film Library Advisory Committee, 129; and Harvard Film Library, 128; and MoMA Film Library, 129; and National Archives, 127; and Pickfair event, 131  
 Hays Office, 51, 157. *See also* Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA)  
 Hess, Rudolph, 113  
 Hill, Katherine, 173  
 Hitchcock, Alfred, 25  
 Hitchcock, Russel T., 126  
 Hitler, Adolf, 89, 163  
 Hobsbawm, Eric, 76  
 Hollywood, 53, 171, 192; adaptations of, 12; and classical films, 9; and cultural and educational institutions, 10, 34, 50–51; and film education movement, 57–58; films, negative influence of, 12; and Great Depression, 37; and leisure industry, 37, 66; and little cinemas, 40, 188; modes of production, distribution, and exhibition, 9, 37, 53, 192; and MoMA Film Library, 120; and movie theaters, 9, 35–36, 37; narrative and style, 9; and public education, 33–34; and synchronized sound, 37  
*Hollywood Quarterly*, 141  
*Hollywood Spectator*, 14  
*Hound and Horn*, 14, 125  
*House & Garden*, 92  
 Howard, Frances, 131  
 Howard, Sidney, 42  
*H<sub>2</sub>O* (1929), 63  
 Huff, Theodore, 63  
*Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923), 176  
 Hunter College, 114  
 Huyssen, Andreas, 71, 74
- impressionism, 75  
 Ince, Nell, 130  
 Ince, Thomas, 157  
 Indiana University, 164  
*Informer, The* (1935), 170  
 Ingram, Rex, 157  
 International Exhibition of Modern Art (1926), 75  
 International Film Arts Guild, 225n16  
 International Institute of Cinematography (Rome), 114  
*International Review of Educational Cinematography*, 14, 55  
 International Style, 97  
*Intolerance* (1916), 132, 156  
 invented traditions, 76  
*Irwin-Rice Kiss* (1896), 132  
*Italian Straw Hat* (1927), 117, 157  
 Iwerks, Ub, 138, 156
- Jacobs, Lea, 57  
 Jacobs, Lewis, 118  
*Jazz Singer, The* (1927), 138, 156

- Johnson, Phillip, 103, 107, 249n104  
 Johnson, William E. "Pussyfoot,"  
 113  
 Jolson, Al, 124  
 Julian, Rupert, 176  
 Julien Levy Gallery, 61  
*Juve contre Fantomas* [*Juve vs. Fantomas*] (1913), 157
- Kandinsky, Wassily, 89  
 Katz, Samuel, 128  
 Kaufman, Stanley, 55  
 Keaton, Buster, 124, 157  
 Kennedy, Joseph, 128; and film studies,  
 54  
 Kent, Sidney P., 138  
 Kinetoscope, 3  
 King, Henry, 138  
*Kino Pravda* (1922), 168  
 Kirstein, Lincoln, 41, 107; and Film  
 Society (New York), 125  
 Klee, Paul, 89  
 Klein, Charles, 63  
 Knight, Eric, 119  
 Knopf, Alfred A., 41  
 Kodascope Libraries, 49  
 Korda, Alexander, 103, 117  
 Kracauer, Siegfried, 118, 125, 145  
 Kress, 82  
 Kubrick, Stanley, 25  
 Kunsthalle, 91  
 Kunstmuseum, 91
- Laemmle, Carl, 138  
*Land without Bread* (1932), 163  
 Lang, Fritz, 117, 153, 157, 245n69  
 Langlois, Henri, 115, 252n13  
 laserdisc, 36  
 Lasky, Jesse, 128; and film studies, 53;  
 and Pickfair event, 130, 131  
*Last Card, The* (1915), 157  
*Last Laugh, The* (1924), 157, 168, 171  
 Lazarsfeld, Paul F., 143  
 League of Nations, 55  
 Léger, Fernand, 61, 157; at MoMA, 17,  
 113, 118  
 Legion of Decency, 11, 157
- leisure industry, politics of, 76–77. *See*  
*also* Hollywood  
 Lerner, Irving, 54  
 LeRoy, Mervin, 17, 157; and Pickfair  
 event, 130  
 Lescaze, William, 70  
 Lesser, Sol, 130  
 Levine, Lawrence, 75–77  
 Levy, Jean Benoit, 232n70  
 Levy, Julien, 41–42, 61, 232n70  
 Lewitt Cinema Picture Company,  
 228n40  
 Leyda, Jay, 61, 64, 163; and film stud-  
 ies, 54, 119; and MoMA Film Li-  
 brary, 116–18, 181  
 libraries, 68  
 Library of Congress, 25, 192  
*Life*, 92  
*Life Cycle of the Oyster, The* (nd), 49  
 Lighton, Louis D., 130  
 Linder, Max, 170  
 Lindsay, Vachel, 49; and film studies,  
 53  
*Little Caesar* (1930), 17, 157  
 little cinemas, 39–40, 188; emergence  
 of, 6  
*Little Women* (1934), 12  
 Lloyd, Harold, 157; and Pickfair event,  
 130, 131, 135, 138  
 Loew's International, 51  
 Lorentz, Pare, 140  
*Lot in Sodom* (1933), 63, 104  
*Love of Jeanne Ney, The* (1927), 168  
*Love Parade, The* (1930), 157  
 Loy, Mina, 61  
 Lubitsch, Ernst, 157, 171; and Pickfair  
 event, 130  
 Luce, Henry, 92  
 Lumière Brothers, 156, 170  
 Lye, Len, 117, 140  
 Lynes, Russel, 185
- M (1931), 117  
 MacDonald, Dwight, 41–42  
 MacGowan, Kenneth, 130  
 Machine Age Exhibition (1927), 75  
*Madame Sans Gene* (1911), 179

- Mamoulian, Rouben, 104  
 March of Time, 158  
*Mark of Zoro, The*, 178  
 Marsh, Mae, 132  
 Marshall Field's (department store),  
   87, 92  
 Marshall, John, 111, 142  
 Marx, Karl, 84  
 Marx Brothers, 124, 179  
 Marxism, 90  
 mass culture, 69–74; and art museums,  
   74  
 mass museology, 72, 73  
 materialism, and art, 73–74  
 Mayer, Louis B., 135  
 Medical Film Library, 229n53  
 Méliès, Georges, 156, 170  
 Mellon, 82  
 Mercanton, Louis, 173  
 Met, the. *See* Metropolitan Museum  
   of Art  
 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), 129,  
   138; and educational films, 51; and  
   MoMA Film Library, 32  
*Metropolis* (1927), 117, 157  
 Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met),  
   75, 78, 129  
 Mickey Mouse, 49, 124  
*Midi* (1935), 140  
 Milestone, Lewis, 132, 138  
 Minnesota, University of, 164; and au-  
   diovisual lending libraries, 52  
 Mishkin, Leo, 173  
 Missouri, University of, 164  
 modern art: and consumer culture, 87;  
   definitions of, 73–74; disagreements  
   about, 101; and gender, 246n79;  
   New York reception of, 75; publica-  
   tions about, 75  
 modernism: and mass culture 74; defi-  
   nitions of, 73–74  
 Moholy-Nagy, László, 89  
*Monsieur Beaucaire* (1924), 157  
 Morey, Charles Rufus, 86  
*Mother* (1926), 168  
*Motion Picture Classic*, 39  
*Motion Picture Daily*, 135  
*Motion Picture Herald*, 135  
 Motion Picture Patents Company  
   (MPPC), 227n30  
 Motion Picture Producers and Distrib-  
   utors of America (MPPDA), 11, 111,  
   114, 224n3, 235n86, 241n26; and  
   educational projects, 11; and film  
   appreciation, 12; and film's histori-  
   cal value, 127; and films in educa-  
   tion, 50–51; and film studies, 54;  
   Production Code, 11; and schools,  
   230n59  
*Motion Picture Review Digest*, 13  
 Mount Holyoke College, 164  
*Movie Makers*, 14, 39, 64. *See also*  
   *Amateur Movie Makers*  
*Movies March On, The*, 169  
 movie theaters, 19, 35; Acme, 40; ad-  
   missions, 37–38, 225n17; Cameo,  
   40; chains of, 38; commercial, 35, 37,  
   39 225n16; exhibitions of art,  
   247n84; 55th Street Playhouse, 40;  
   and Hollywood, 35, 38; jumbotrons,  
   36; Little Carnegie, 40, 106; little  
   theaters, 39–40, 188; and mass audi-  
   ences, 35; and technology, 37;  
   megatheaters, 18; picture palaces,  
   38; Radio City Music Hall, 38; Roxy,  
   38; third run, 4; Vieux Colombier,  
   41. *See also* film exhibition: theatri-  
   cal; little cinemas  
 Movietone News, 139  
 Movietone School Series, 51  
*Moving Picture World*, 10  
*Mr. Motorboat's Last Stand* (1933), 63  
 Mumford, Lewis, 41; and Film Society  
   (New York), 125; *Technics and Civi-  
   lization*, 126  
 Murnau, F. W., 117, 152, 156–57, 168,  
   171  
 Musée de Jeu de Paume (Paris),  
   124–25  
 Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), 1,  
   28, 176; and American Museum of  
   Natural History, 153; and anti-  
   institutional art, 74; and art dis-  
   courses, 93; and art galleries, 98;

- Museum of Modern Art (*continued*)  
 “Art through the Window” exhibit, 97; and Bauhaus, 89; catalogues, 98; and changing ideas about film, 28; and children’s art, 99; circulating exhibits, 69, 90, 94–95, 97, 247n82; and commerce, 246n79; and consumer culture, 69, 98; and cultural stewardship, 8, 122; criticism of, 244n60; Department of Architecture, 101; and department stores, 94, 98, 245n72, 246n79; early history of, 70, 75, 88–89; educational programs, 90, 94, 96–97, 122; and everyday life, 100; and films as museum art, 1; film stills as postcards, 98; goals of, 90; internal debates, 94, 97; as *Kunstmuseum* and *Kunsthalle*, 91; as living museum, 68–69, 91; and mass museology, 28, 72, 73, 94, 97, 100; and media, 69–70, 72, 97, 98–99; membership, 90, 98; and Metropolitan Museum of Art, 75, 88; mobility of, 68, 72, 94, 98–99; model for, 90; and modern art, 68–69, 88; movie theaters, 247n82; and museum culture, 72, 76; and new ideas about art, 99–100; and new technology, 99–100; programming, 94; and Progressive movement, 96; publicity, 92–95, 97, 99, 168, 184, 247n82; publicity contests, 248n88; radio, 69–70, 94–95; and reproducibility of art, 71, 98, 99; research at, 145; and social reform, 74; and specialized audience, 13; and subway art, 99; trustees, 95, 101; Young People’s Gallery, 96
- Museum of Modern Art exhibitions, 92–93, 100
- Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)  
 Film Library, 1, 5, 29; acquisition of films, 4, 108, 113, 115–17, 138, 148, 161; activities of, 16, 17–18, 24, 29–30, 34–35, 111, 119, 123, 149–50, 161, 191; admission, 150, 153, 165, 177; and American film industry, 16–17, 29, 111, 120, 127–29, 138–40, 189; and audience, 1, 4, 5, 23, 145, 149–53, 155, 170, 177–78, 179, 180, 181, 184, 186, 189; collecting and cataloguing films, 1, 4, 16, 19, 20, 111, 113, 123, 153–58, 161–63, 184, 189, 190; circulating programs of, 25, 153–58, 164, 168–69, 172–4, 188, 193; and conflicts and debates, 28; and consumer culture, 92; and cultural value, 16, 171, 186; “Distinctive Achievement” Academy Award (1938), 140, 169; and education, 33, 34, 45, 65, 111, 112, 149–150, 162, 187; and Eurocentrism, 167; and Federation Internationale des Archives du Film (FIAPF), 25, 115, 125; and film art, 111, 113, 120–21, 133–35, 147, 183–84, 186–87, 189; and film as visual history, 32–33, 112, 120, 134, 158, 184, 187; and film at schools and universities, 16, 34, 120, 162, 164; and film community, 114; and film culture, 174, 187–88, 191, 193; and film discourses, 7, 15, 34, 164, 189; film donations to, 138; film exchanges, 176; film exhibition, 2, 16, 20, 24, 27–29, 34–35, 66, 111, 137, 150–53, 170, 183–84, 188; and film history, 25, 112, 123–24, 148, 189; Film Library Advisory Committee, 129, 140; film reception, 29, 34, 152; and film-related resources, 16, 28; film rental, 161, 166–67; film series, 153–59, 162, 170, 175; and film societies, 25, 164, 188, 254n27; and film studies, 25, 114, 118, 119, 124, 133–35, 153, 164, 186, 191; founding of, 1, 4, 6; funding of, 4, 16, 107, 112, 129, 141, 145, 148, 166; and gallery exhibits, 153; and gangster films, 157; goals of, 16; and index to film literature, 25, 118; influence of, 7, 25; internationalism of, 115, 118, 168, 181, 183; justification of,

- 121–23, 125; lending films, 16; location of, 120, 149, 153, 176–77; and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 32; and modernist movement, 5, 30, 147, 190; and museological shift, 18, 189–90; and museum trustees, 29, 111, 120–27, 147, 155; as nonprofit venture, 111, 132–33, 137; nontheatrical distribution and exhibition, 4, 7, 137, 149; official status of, 110; and old films, 122, 132, 170–71, 175–76; Pickfair event, 130–39; plans of, 107, 114, 171, 183; politics of, 22; and popular culture, 16, 158; and populism, 124, 151, 167, 182–84; and press releases, 18, 138, 151, 160–61, 164, 168–69, 173; programs, 4, 16, 29, 32, 151–52, 160, 167, 170, 176, 184, 187–88; project of, 7, 16, 22, 30, 114, 135, 138–39, 147, 151; publications of, 28, 35, 123, 151, 187; and public relations, 16, 119, 168–69, 184; questionnaire, 114; reactions to, 110, 117–18, 138, 180–81; and relationship to MoMA, 73, 121, 126, 149, 176; resources, uses of, 220n53; revenue, 110; and Rockefeller Foundation, 29, 111, 131, 144–46, 149, 166–67, 189; and slapstick comedy, 158; and social reform groups, 16; and social regulation, 29; and specialized film programs, 16, 153; status, 110, 177, 183; study center, 111; success of, 163, 166, 193; and technology, 18, 20, 28, 92, 151, 166, 191, 193; theater, lack of, 153; and transformation of cinema, 2, 18, 23–24, 28, 110, 187–88; unprofitable venues, 129; and use of intertitles, 164, 165; and visiting writers, filmmakers, and researchers, 118; watching films at, 20, 22, 25, 35, 187–88
- Museum of Modern Art Film Library Bulletin*, 23
- Museum of Modern Art Film Library catalogue, 17, 22, 162–63
- Museum of Modern Art Film Library circulating programs, 17, 152, 155–48, 168, 177–82
- Museum of Natural History. *See* American Museum of Natural History
- museums: and art reproduction, 85; and audience, 77, 84–85; changes to curatorial practices in, 84–85; critical approaches to, 70–74; and cultural politics, 71, 75–77, 83; and democracy, 83; docent, history of, 77; and education, 77, 82; European, 88; extension programs, 77; and Federal Revenue Act (1935), 81; and film, 78, 79, 85; funding of, 81, 82; and Great Depression, 81; and history, 75–77; lantern slides, 78; lending libraries, 77, 78; maintaining relevance of, 85; mass culture, 69–74, 83; and media, 70, 72, 73, 85–86; mobility of, 72, 77, 78; and New Deal, 81; photography, 78; programming and publications of, 85; and Progressive movement, 82–83; reproducibility, 72; temporary exhibits, 85; traveling exhibits, 77, 78, 85; and YMCA/YWCA, 77
- museum studies, 70
- Myxomycetes, The*, 152
- Nation*, 14
- National Archives, 11, 25, 114, 128; Motion Picture Division, arguments for, 127
- National Board of Review, 5, 114, 128, 218n43; and educational films, 12; film culture, 16; film studies, 54; and MoMA Film Library, 119
- National Board of Review Magazine*, 39, 164
- National Congress of Parents and Teachers, 52
- National Council of Catholic Women, 13
- National Council of Teachers of English, 52

- National Council of Women, 13  
 National Education Association (NEA), 56; and educational films, 12, 50, 52; and films in schools, 50  
 National Film Board of Canada, 6  
 National Film Library, 228n40  
*Navigator, The* (1924), 157  
 NBC radio, 15  
 Nesbit, John, 32  
 New Deal, 81, 152  
*New Leader*, 181  
*New Republic*, 14  
 New School for Social Research, 62, 164, 236n100; and film studies, 54  
*Newsweek*, 92  
*New Theatre*, 169, 74  
*New Yorker*, 92  
*New York Hat* (1912), 132, 135, 156  
*New York Herald Tribune*, 169, 175  
*New York Telegraph*, 171  
*New York Times*, 39, 46, 173, 180; annual film critics award, 15; "Best of" lists, 15; and film criticism, 15  
*New York Tribune*, 14  
 New York University (NYU), 164; film studies courses, 54  
 nickelodeon, 3, 76  
*Night of Love, The* (1927), 139  
 nontheatrical film screenings, 5; and distribution and exhibition, 35–36, 44, 49; and education, 223n2; film rental agencies, 4; at MoMA Film Library, 4, 28; projectors, 44, 49, 223–24nn2,3  
 Nugent, Frank, 173
- October* (1928), 102  
 Office of Radio Research at Columbia University, 142  
 Office of War Information, 162  
 Ohio University, 52  
 Olcott, Sidney, 157  
 old films, 1, 3–4  
 Otterson, John, 138  
*Our Movie Made Children*, 232n77  
*Outlaw and his Wife, The* (1917), 157
- Pabst, G. W., 61, 121  
 Packard, Artemas, 246n79; and MoMA report, 95–96  
 Paley, William, 92  
 Panofsky, Erwin, 119; and film art, 129  
 panopticon, 188  
 Paramount Pictures, 129, 138; and educational films, 51  
*Parents' Magazine* "Weekly Movie Guide," 169  
 Parent-Teacher Association, 140  
*Paris Qui Dort [The Crazy Ray]* (1923), 117, 157  
 Parson, Louella, 135  
*Passion* (1921), 171  
*Passion of Joan of Arc, The* (1928), 106, 157  
 Pathé, 10, 156, 171; and films in schools, 50; and film formats, 46  
 Patterson, Frances, 53  
 Payne, Oliver, 251n119  
 Payne Fund Studies, 157; and film studies, 55, 141; and effects of Hollywood films, 11, 232n75  
 Payne-Whitney, estate of, 251n119  
 Percy, Hiram Maxim, 64  
*Phantom of the Opera* (1925), 176  
 philanthropy, 111, 189. *See also* Rockefeller Foundation  
 Pickford, Mary, 124; and Pickfair event, 130, 131, 135, 138  
 picture palaces, 3, 4. *See also* movie theaters  
 Pioneer Pictures, 92, 113  
 Pittsburgh, University of, 164  
*Plow that Broke the Plains, The* (1936), 140  
*Pluto's Judgment Day* (1935), 132  
 Polan, Dana, 53  
 Pollack, Sidney, 25  
 popular culture, and social reform, 83  
 Porter, Allen, 245n69  
*Portrait of a Young Man* (1931), 63  
 Potamkin, Harry Alan, 64, 125; and film societies, 41–44; and film studies, 54; manifesto of, 62; on film watching, 43–44

- Powell, Frank, 138, 156  
 Princeton Public Opinion Research Project, 142  
 Princeton Radio Project, 142  
 Princeton Shortwave Listening Center, 142  
 Princeton University, 129, 164; and art history, 86; and audiovisual lending libraries, 52  
*Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933), 103, 117  
 Progressive Education Association (PEA), 52, 235n86; and art in schools, 83  
 Progressive movement, 82–83  
*Public as Artist, The*, 90  
*Public Enemy* (1931), 138  
 Pudovkin, Vsevolod, 102, 121, 168
- Queen Christina* (1933), 103–4  
*Queen Elizabeth* (1912), 173  
 Quigley, Martin, 232n70
- Radcliffe College, 114  
 Ramseye, Terry, 232n70, 241n26; and film discourses, 13  
 Ray, Man, 61, 87, 113, 117  
 RCA-Victor Manufacturing Company, 137  
 Reichsfilmarchiv, 115  
 Reid, Wallace, 176  
 Réjane, Gabrielle, 179  
 Renoir, Jean, 211n14  
 Resettlement Administrations, 140; and MoMA Film Library, 119  
 Richards, Charles R., Dr., 100  
 Riefenstahl, Leni, 140, 168  
 RKO Pictures, 12, 139; and educational films, 51  
 Robinson, Arthur, 164  
 Rockefeller, Abby Aldrich, 88, 106, 167  
 Rockefeller Center, 97, 143  
 Rockefeller Foundation, 4, 107, 251n119; and educational film, 143–44, 147; Humanities Division, 111, 141; and MoMA Film Library, 4, 111, 112, 120, 129, 141, 189; media projects of, 142  
 Rockefeller, Nelson: and D. W. Griffith, 181–82; and defense of Barry, 181–82; and MoMA, 95; and Film Society (New York), 41–42, 125; and museum opening (1939), 238n1, 247n82; philanthropic activities of, 82  
 Rodakiewicz, Henwar, 63  
 Rogers, Buck, 178  
 Rogoff, Irit, 70  
 Roosevelt, Eleanor, 169  
 Roosevelt, Franklin Delano, 68, 81, 169  
 Rotha, Paul, 140; and film discourses, 13; and film studies, 119; at MoMA Film Library, 118, 145; on film societies, 226n25  
 Rubin, J. Robert, 119, 129  
 Ruttman, Walter, 163
- Safety Last!* (1923), 138  
 Sandler, Irving, 87  
*San Francisco Chronicle*, 173  
 satellite TV, 192  
*Scarface* (1932), 157  
 Schlemmer, Oskar, 89  
 School Film Libraries Association, 144  
 schools, range of film use in, 234–35n85  
 Scorsese, Martin, 25  
*Screen*, 221n57  
*Screen Actors Guild Bulletin*, 139  
 Sears (department store), 44  
*Seashell and the Clergyman* (1929), 117  
 Seastrom, Victor, 121, 157  
*Seattle Daily Times*, 173  
 Secrets of Success, The, 235n86  
 Seldes, Gilbert, 39, 64, 118–19, 174  
 Selig, William, 132  
 Selznick, David O., 92, 106, 113  
 Selznick International Pictures, 92, 113, 139  
 Sennett, Mack, 121, 156, 158, 179



- Sex Life of a Polyp, The* (1928), 138, 157
- She Done Him Wrong* (1933), 104
- Sherman, Daniel, 70
- Sherman, Lowell, 104
- Shoedsack, Ernest B., 157
- Shootin' Mad* (1911), 158
- Show-at-Home-Movie-Library, Inc., 51
- Shram, Wilbur, 143
- Siegfried* (1924), 157
- Sievers, Herman A., 80
- Sight and Sound*, 14
- Sills, Milton, 54
- Simon, Stella, 156
- Singer, Ben, 50
- 16mm: and amateur film production, 48, 65; and film culture, 58, 60; and film exchange, 60, 67; and film libraries, 48–49, 60, 66–67; and film viewing, 66; and MoMA Film Library, 20, 166, 191; and noncommercial cinema, 59; and nontheatrical exhibition, 46, 56, 60–61, 66–67; in Great Britain, 235n93; and movie theaters, 227n32; network, 58, 66; projectors, 4, 20, 166, 181, 223n2, 228n39; spread of, 233–34nn79–82; rental, 56, 166; reversal stock, 227n31. *See also* film technology
- Skeleton Dance* (1929), 138
- Slesinger, Donald, 143
- Slide, Anthony, 51
- Slime Molds* (nd), 152
- Smiling Madame Beudet, The* (1922), 157
- Smith College, 164
- Smithsonian Institute, 241n26
- social reform groups, 12; and MoMA Film Library, 16
- Société Anonyme, Inc., 75
- Society for Cinema and Media Studies, 25. *See also* Society for Cinema Studies; Society of Cinematologists
- Society for Cinema Studies, 220n50. *See also* Society for Cinema and Media Studies; Society of Cinematologists
- Society of Cinematologists, 25, 220n50. *See also* Society for Cinema and Media Studies; Society for Cinema Studies
- Society of Motion Picture Engineers (SMPE), 11, 241n26; and MoMA Film Library, 119
- Song of Ceylon* (1934), 163
- Soviet (film) programs, 6
- Special Libraries Association, 169
- Spectator*, 103
- Spigel, Lynn, 71
- Standard Dictionary, 49
- Standard Oil, 251n119
- Stanford University, 54, 164
- Steam Boat Willie* (1928), 156
- Stebbins, Robert, 174
- Steichen, Edward, 87
- Steiner, Ralph, 63
- Stella Dallas* (1925), 138
- Sterling, Philip, 48
- Stevens, David H., 129, 142
- Stieglitz, Alfred, 75
- Stiller, Mauritz, 157
- Stone, Edward, 97
- Strand, Paul, 87
- Studio International*, 75
- Sullivan, Mary Quinn, 88
- Sunrise* (1927), 156
- Superman, 178
- Supreme Court, 11
- Surrealism, 74
- Swanson, Gloria, 142
- Syracuse University, 52
- Tabu* (1931), 152
- Tarzan and His Mate* (1934), 103
- Tastemakers, The* (1949), 185
- Taurog, Norman, 124, 153
- Teaching Film Custodians, 230n59
- Technicolor, 92, 106, 113
- television, 36, 45; and art, 71; and cultural value, 71; and museums, 69, 71
- Tell-Tale Heart, The* (1928), 63

- Ten Days That Shook the World* (1927), 168
- Theater Arts Monthly*, 39
- Theatre Arts*, 14
- Thief of Bagdad, The* (1924), 178
- 35mm: films, 4; and MoMA Film Library, 20; reduced to 16mm, 4, 230n58. *See also* film technology
- Thrasher, Frederic, 54
- Three Little Pigs, The* (1933), 103
- Three Musketeers, The* (1931), 176
- Thunder over Mexico* (1933), 104
- Time*, 92
- Totalitarian Communications Research Project, 142
- Trip to the Moon, A* (1902), 156
- Triumph of the Will* (1934), 140, 168
- Twentieth Century–Fox, 52, 138–39; educational department, 51
- Un Chien Andalou* (1929), 61, 117
- Underworld* (1927), 17, 157
- Unholy Three, The* (1924), 157
- United Artists, 139
- Universal Picture Company, 138; nontheatrical department, 51
- universities, 3
- University Film Foundation, 231n60
- University of Iowa, 55
- University of California, Berkeley, 164
- University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), 55, 215n29
- University of Southern California (USC), 54–55, 215n29
- U.S. Bureau of Mines, 79
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, 114
- U.S. Department of Commerce, 36
- utopianism, 215n30
- Valentino, Rudolph, 124, 176
- van Gogh, Vincent, 91, 92–93
- Vanity Fair* (1915), 179
- Vanity Fair* (magazine), 14, 87, 92; “A Modern Art Questionnaire,” 88
- Van Zile, Edward, 53
- Variety* (1925), 117
- Variety* (serial), 104, 135
- Vassar College, 114, 164
- VCR, 36
- Vertov, Dziga, 168; and film discourses, 13
- VHS format, 5, 191
- Viacom International, 192
- Victor Animatograph, 46–47
- Victrola records, 87
- Vidor, King, 119, 139
- Visual Education*, 55
- von Sternberg, Josef, 17, 157
- von Stroheim, Erich, 17, 152, 157
- Wadsworth Athenaeum, 106–7
- Wanger, Walter, 130
- Warburg, Edward, 70; justification of MoMA Film Library, 125
- Warner Brothers, 52, 138–39
- Warning Shadows* (1922), 165
- Wash Day Troubles* (1896), 156
- Washington Film Society, 119
- Washington University, 164
- Watson, James Sibley, 63, 104
- Webber, Melville, 63, 104
- Wegener, Paul, 117, 157
- Weill, Kurt, 61
- Weinberg, Herman, 39, 64, 174
- Wellesley College, 86
- Wellman, William, 138, 152
- West, Mae, 104; films at MoMA Film Library, 22
- Whistler, James, 185
- White, Pearl, 176
- White House, 169
- Whitney, Gertrude Vanderbilt, 75, 106
- Whitney, John Hay, 92, 106, 112–13, 120, 251n119; and Pickfair event, 130
- Whitney Museum, 75, 106
- Whitney Studio Club, 75, 106
- Wiener, Robert, 117, 157, 171, 211n14
- Wiener, Norbert, 143
- Wild Boys of the Road* (1933), 152
- William and Mary College, 164
- Williams, Raymond, 73–74

- Wilson, Norman, 59  
*Wind, The* (1928), 157  
 Winton, Roy, 40, 232n70  
 Wollheim, Louis, 132  
 Women's Motion Picture Society of  
 Japan, 114  
 Workers Film and Photo League  
 (WFPL), 40, 42, 61–62, 114; activi-  
 ties, 62; and film gauge, 62,  
 236n101; and film studies, 54; li-  
 brary of films, 62–63; manifesto of,  
 62  
 Workers' International Relief, 62  
*Workers' Theater*, 62  
 Works Progress Administration  
 (WPA), 118  
*World Film News and Television*  
*Progress*, 14  
 World's Fair of 1939, 176  
*World-Telegram*, 171  
 World Wide Web, 191  
 Worsley, Wallace, 176  
 Wright, Basil, 163  
 writing about cinema, transformation  
 of, 3  
 Yale University, 52, 230n60  
 YMCA, 9, 233n79; and film reviews  
 and evaluations, 13; and museums,  
 68, 77  
*You Only Live Once* (1937), 153,  
 245n69  
 Young People's Gallery, 246n80  
 Zimmerman, Patricia, 237n111  
 Zukor, Adolph, 53, 128