

**books
reviewed**



The Public Arts

By Gilbert Seldes, Published (1956) by Simon P. Schuster, 630 Fifth Ave., New York 20. 303 pp. 5½ × 8½ in. Price \$3.95.

The media of mass communication have resulted in the offering of program material for the first time in history to the public as a whole and not merely to a segment of it. This universal appeal implies universal obligations.

"The base of this new concept," says Gilbert Seldes, "is that, by their own nature, these arts are matters of public concern, subject to public opinion; that outside of law the public has sovereign

rights over them, since these arts, no less than the institution of government, belong to the people." In order words, public art involves public responsibility. This is the nub of Seldes' book, and his somewhat discursive thread of analysis and reminiscences of the years of growth of motion pictures, radio and television, the "public arts," is finally tied off in the last chapter with an appeal for awareness by the public of its responsibility and the formulation of plans for better use of the media.

In degree of universality, the art of the motion picture has least claim of the three to qualify for Seldes' definition. Radio and television have been able to invade the American home and become a part of its daily life to a greater extent. But the chapters that describe the early triumphs and the progress of motion pictures through the various technological advances that have led up to the latest wide-screen processes indicate quite clearly Seldes' predilection for this, the "lovely art," which alone, at different times, has "given promise of becoming the single really new art of our time."

One chapter discusses and analyzes the growth of the animated film, with some shrewd criticism of Disney's achievements and a handsome bouquet to UPA. Another describes the new potentials afforded by the larger screen, whose success Seldes ascribes interestingly, not to the greater realism obtainable, but to its achievement of the imaginative quality of the trompe l'oeil painting, which is at the opposite pole from reality itself. "How in essence," he says, "do the new dimensions of the screen serve reality. They serve the imagination, and that is why we have the exciting prospect of experiencing, for the third time in our lives, a new art of the movies. Looking forward gratefully, we can afford to forget the blunders and bad taste and the stupidity that have attended the movies in the past."

In his description of the growth of radio and television, Seldes discusses a great many programs and a great many personalities. Radio is passed over quite rapidly. Television is the subject of almost two-thirds of the book. True to his definition of the public art, he deals only with those popular programs having mass-entertainment appeal, and each of these he analyzes and generally condemns with an effectiveness that is the greater because of the moderation of his expression. He is never supercilious, he does not indulge in invective; indeed less objective viewers might often find him too tolerant of what he occasionally refers to as the twaddle put out by the broadcasters. But his careful analysis of the mechanics and motivations of network programming is calculated to create the awareness of the need for improvement which he points to in his conclusion.

How the public obligation to improve the public arts is to be achieved Seldes does not presume to say. But this book makes a major contribution towards the first requisite — making the public aware of the issues and of its obligation.—D.C.

The 23rd semiannual edition of *Television Factbook* is available from Television Digest, Wyatt Building, Washington 5, D.C. Priced at \$4.50, the 456-page directory includes a 43 × 29 in. wall map showing

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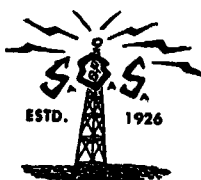
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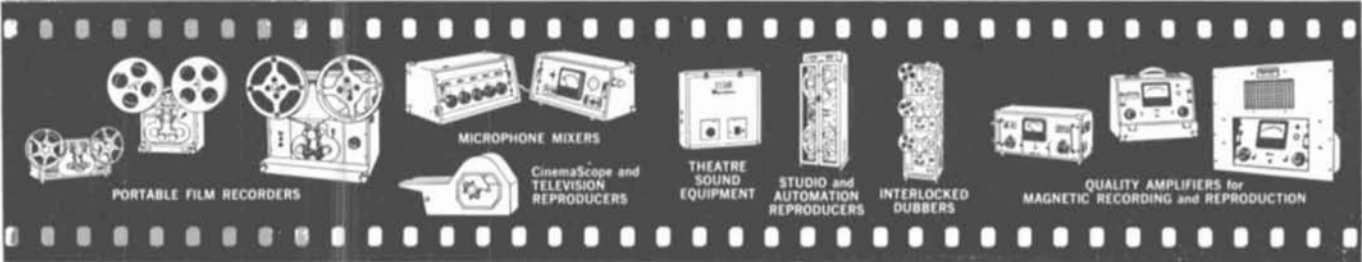
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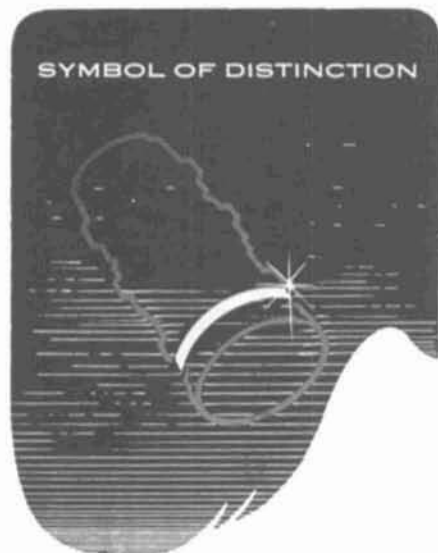
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locations of TV stations and network routes. The *Factbook* also contains an international TV directory which lists stations, receivers, technical standards and other items for all nations. One section describes community antenna systems and lists 480 such systems in operation with an average of 912 subscribers each. There are also directories of networks, program syndicators, TV and radio manufacturers and electronics labs; and statistical tables on TV time sales, set and tube production and sales.

The Human Figure in Motion

By Eadweard Muybridge. Published (1955) Dover Publications, Inc., 920 Broadway, York 10. 215 pp. incl. 195 plates. 8 X 10 1/2 in. \$10.00.

The name of Muybridge piques the interest of present-day photographers of motion who have seen many reproduced examples of his photographs of animals in motion. Muybridge is also of great interest from historical and general photographic viewpoints. The 8-page introduction about him and introducing the plates of this volume is informative.

Today's artists and animators will find here a rich reference on the posturing of the human figure—man, woman and child. After experimenting with and improving on his multiple-camera technique in the 1870's in California and Pennsylvania, by 1881 he was visiting France and enlightening artists there with his projected pictures of animals and men in motion.

Muybridge was one of the early few who in their efforts to analyze motion by photography laid the basis for the development of motion pictures. *The Human Figure in Motion* is a well-done reprint of a major portion of what was apparently Muybridge's last and largest publication. Although there have been many editions and reprints, presenting various selections of the plates, old copies are not common or easily accessible and so this new edition is a valuable reference.—V.A.

Teaching by Closed Circuit Television

Published (1956) by The American Council on Education, 1785 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington 6, D.C. 66 pp. Paperbound. 6 X 9 in. Price \$1.00.

The book reports on a conference held Feb. 26-28, 1956 at the State University of Iowa. The conference was sponsored jointly by the University and the Committee on Television of the American Council on Education. Participating were 93 persons from 55 institutions and 16 organizations, including administrators, teachers and television technicians. Reports were heard from four experimental centers, State University of Iowa, Pennsylvania State University, New York University and Stephens College.

In his introductory remarks, Carroll V. Newsom, Conference Chairman said, "Our primary concern in educational TV must be the quality of the people working in the medium. It is not a place for the stodgy, the conventional, for people who are unable to look at problems in this new light.

We need people with imagination. Educational television is new. It is expensive. One of our problems is to arouse public interest so the costs can be met."

The overall impression given by the report is that, generally speaking, the conferees agreed on the advantages of TV-teaching, but with certain reservations.

Dewey B. Stuit, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts summed up the ideas of many educators when he said "We face a genuine problem finding enough competent teachers in the years ahead. This method will permit us to distribute a good instructor among many students and to get him closer to those students than the lecture method permits. We do not know what the effect of this will be on students who will be in a purely spectator or listener role. . . . Television is a good method depending on how much you believe in the merits of discussion over lecture, how important student-instructor intimacy is, and how much you want to distribute a first-class teacher throughout a series of classrooms.

Film and Cinema Statistics

A UNESCO publication available in the U.S. from Columbia University Press, 2960 Broadway, New York 27. 111 pp. 8 1/2 X 11 in. Price 50 cents.

The motion-picture industry is poorly documented and available statistics are frequently unreliable, although the yearly turnover is estimated at \$4 billion and world-wide attendance at 10 billion persons. The aim of the UNESCO report is to evaluate existing statistics in certain selected areas of the industry and to make suggestions for the adoption of uniform standards throughout the world for the reporting and interpreting of motion-picture statistics.

This report covers production and importation of films, facilities for film exhibition and box office receipts. It was found that one of the greatest hindrances to interpreting reports from various countries was the lack of standardized terminology. For example, the definition of "feature" film and the distinctions between "long" and "short" film vary widely from country to country. Thirteen different standards were found to be used in 23 countries to differentiate between "long" and "short" films.

One section of the carefully documented report contains suggestions for standardizing international statistics and offers a detailed scheme of concepts and definitions. A résumé of this section is repeated in French and in Spanish.—R.H.

The 1956 edition of the *Radio and Television Bibliography*, issued each year by the Office of Education of the U.S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare, is available from the Department or the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, 25, D.C. (price, 25 cents). The bibliography contains, for the most part, titles of books on the historical, philosophical and sociological aspects of the media, vocational training and general interest. It does, however, contain a listing of 65 books dealing with engineering and technical developments.

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