

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON PRESERVATION OF FILM*

Summary.—*A statement of recent activities of the Committee, and a proposed program of future work.*

The Committee met at the Hotel Pennsylvania, New York, N. Y., on October 13, 1937. Members in attendance were J. G. Bradley, *Chairman*, J. I. Crabtree, A. S. Dickinson, T. Ramsaye, and J. E. Abbott. Substitutes attending were K. Famulener for W. A. Schmidt and C. A. Lindstrom for R. Evans. Mr. Bradley substituted for C. L. Gregory. V. B. Sease and M. E. Gillette were represented by written submissions setting forth their views on problems before the Committee.

The Chairman made a brief report on related work being done at Washington, summarized briefly as follows: (1) The National Archives storage cabinets, previously approved by the Committee, have been installed, and field tests with other types of cabinet are being made; (2) the research work at the Bureau of Standards on preservation of records has been resumed; and (3) the Federal Fire Council has become increasingly active in an effort to minimize fire hazards.

It was pointed out that emphasis is shifting (temporarily, at least) from a consideration of preservation in terms of deterioration to a consideration of preservation in terms of film fires and film handling. This shift does not represent lack of interest in the problems of deterioration, nor does it indicate that the work in that field has been completed. It is based rather upon the fact that a very large quantity of nitrocellulose material in Federal custody has been discovered recently, lacking adequate fire protection. It is also the result of increasing interest on the part of corporate and private collectors in preserving this type of record. Adding momentum to this shift have been some recent and rather extensive film fires. It was agreed that the Committee should take cognizance of the fire problem as

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falling in the field of preservation, and render all possible service to those seeking help.

The need for additional funds with which to carry on this work was mentioned, and various means for meeting the emergency were discussed. It was the consensus of opinion that, while certain private individuals and non-Federal agencies might be expected to contribute nominally, the U. S. Government should finance this work, being the most representative agency of all the people.

The Chairman submitted a proposed work program to cover future activities of the Committee, which had been the subject of correspondence between him and the individual members. This program follows:

- (1) The effects of projection heat and light upon films.
- (2) Continued investigation of the use of acetate film base for long-time storage.
- (3) Investigation of other film base materials not in current use.
- (4) A safe yet economical plan for long-time storage.
- (5) A study of the handling and winding of film—roll winding under dust-free conditions.
- (6) Standardized physical and chemical tests to determine condition of films received for storage.
- (7) Chemical and physical treatment for restoration of faded images, deteriorated emulsion, and decomposing base.
- (8) Specifications for processing film for long-time storage.
- (9) A study of printers for old shrunken film.
- (10) Definition of terms: a glossary.

The proposed program was discussed at length and was finally adopted as a general guide, with the recommendation that it be made sufficiently flexible to meet current and local situations. The discussion also enlarged the scope of some of the foregoing items and limited the scope of others. For example, it was suggested that the Committee should continue its study of nitrocellulose film for the reason that for a long time to come it will be necessary to handle that type of material. As to a study of new materials for film bases, the view was expressed that the practical aspects of this properly belonged in the field of commercial enterprise rather than in the experimental field as found in the laboratory; and that much experimentation lies ahead of any successful effort to gain wide acceptance of a new base—all modified by market conditions, sales resistance, cost of materials, *etc.* The best service the laboratory can render in this regard is to examine specimens submitted to it and give out its

unbiased findings. A study of emulsions, projection light and heat, storage and preservation, handling, restoration of faded images (when practicable), chemical tests, printers for old film, and a standardized glossary were emphasized.

The question was asked whether the Committee should act as a review board or whether it (or its individual members) should participate actively in certain phases of research. Mr. Crabtree expressed the view, shared generally by other members and substitutes present, that while some of the members represented institutions having facilities for doing research work, others did not; and, furthermore, that the final stamp of approval by the National Bureau of Standards would give general acceptance to the work not given to commercial institutions or private individuals. Hence it was agreed that the Committee should continue to act largely in an advisory capacity to the Bureau, except for the following division of labor among members of the Committee:

(1) Mr. Crabtree agreed, with the help of Messrs. Sease and Schmidt, to assume the leadership in the matter of handling film as set out in item 5 of the work program.

(2) Mr. Bradley agreed, with the help of Mr. Dickinson, to take over the work of storage and fire control as set out in item 4.

(3) Item 9, a study of printers, was assigned to Messrs. Gregory and Abbott.

(4) The matter of a standardized glossary as outlined in item 10 was assigned to Messrs. Gregory and Ramsaye.

It was agreed that all other items in the program not covered by these special assignments were to be left to the Chairman, with the help of Messrs. Gillette and Evans, with recommendations that the final work be cleared through the National Bureau of Standards. The Committee pledged its support to this work, and the members present representing manufacturers with research facilities extended this pledge to include the use of these facilities by the Bureau's technical workers.

J. G. BRADLEY, *Chairman*

J. E. ABBOTT

R. EVANS

T. RAMSAYE

J. I. CRABTREE

M. E. GILLETTE

V. B. SEASE

A. S. DICKINSON

C. L. GREGORY

W. A. SCHMIDT