

Spanish, and shipped to all the sister Republics of Latin America. The fashions are then sent abroad for translations into French, German, Swedish, and all the other languages.

THE FILM LIBRARY

BERT HOLST*

Situated on the top floor of the Movietone News building is the Film Morgue or, to be more official, the Movietone News Film Library over which I preside. Few people in the news business have any idea of the true importance of this unpublicized department with its history in cans. As of this day there are stored in our vaults approximately 42 million ft of negative scenes shot all over the world, from the North to the South Poles, from every conceivable angle—ground, air, and underseas.

This film is carefully catalogued with a simplified but all-informative cross index, which allows us to put our hand on any given foot of film in the shortest possible time.

Thirty-two fireproof vaults store this film. Because of space limitations in addition to the millions of feet already mentioned, there are other millions in our out-of-town vaults at Ogdensburg, New Jersey. This latter footage we consider as the most unlikely to be called for by our own company, or by the other clients who use our library for stock shots.

We also have a sound library containing every conceivable sound or a good facsimile of any sound. This is also catalogued in our simplified system and before you could say "Jack Robinson" we could give you anything from an artillery barrage to a Bronx cheer.

One of the greatest worries of a film librarian is that old bogey, fire hazard. A constant vigilance must be maintained where so much inflammable film is kept. Extreme temperatures, either hot or cold, are always a problem with us and at such times we must be careful of gas accumulations and see to it that the entire vault spaces are properly aired. We must also guard against dampness that rots film and dryness that shrinks it. Keeping this invaluable collection of canned history in a good state of preservation means maintaining as near as possible a constant temperature.

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From our library we yearly supply the industry with millions of feet of stock shots. Practically every West Coast production company uses our facilities, that is, when they do not conflict with our service to our parent company, Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation and of course our own newsreel and short subject department.

I do not have time to tell you of the demands made on us which we satisfy in the majority of cases. Being film men you could easily imagine what these are. Some are really tough to fulfill but we manage to do them most of the time. However, there are limits to our ingenuity and we are stumped occasionally. For instance, here are some actual requests we have received from some of our clients.

"Have you a shot," we were once asked, "of an English railroad train running without lights during a blackout?"

Another time a lady editor seriously wired for—and this is the exact description she sent us—two love doves cooing, one gets vexed and draws away, the other seems to pine.

A West Coast producer once asked us for an alligator waving an American flag!

A religious organization in the process of making a biblical picture wired us, "What have you got in your library on Abraham and Moses?"

A big powder manufacturing company making a commercial, wired us to send them a 2-ft shot showing a close-up of the impact of an explosive shell hitting an iceberg.

A famed explorer wishing to illustrate the fiction he dishes out in his lectures wrote us that we would greatly help his film presentation if we could supply him with a pelican diving for a fish; camera to follow him under the water; pelican to catch school of fish; fish swimming in pelican's bill.

Then, as innocently as a newborn babe, another West Coast producer wired us for "A Wednesday afternoon scene—Landscape." This is a complete description of his request!

Of course there are many requests for sound effects, legitimate and otherwise, but I actually got this one: "Can you send us the sound of a moccasin on soft snow?"

That, gentlemen, is a little about the Movietone News Library.