

Rockefeller Support for Non-Commercial Film, 1935-1939

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Previous to the 1930s in the United States, policy-makers had only taken a few dispersed actions towards promoting film as an educational tool. Collections held at the Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC), such as those of the General Education Board (GEB) and the Rockefeller Foundation (RF), contain valuable records that helped me to explore the ideas on education behind foundation support for non-commercial film throughout the twentieth century. These records show how the RF's groundbreaking programme in motion pictures during the 1930s was largely inspired by similar activities and support for non-commercial film resources in other countries such as Britain. The significance of the RAC materials resides in how they foreshadow the ideas and procedures furthering the development of various resources for film education and appreciation in the United States. They also help to demonstrate the key role played by non-commercial film in building up an international network of communication in the years prior to World War II.

Support for Film: Between Humanities and Education

In 1935 the Rockefeller Foundation initiated the Communication Program that aimed to use motion pictures to influence public taste and to improve educational and recreational films.¹ Support for motion pictures, as well as for radio, was circumscribed under the Humanities Division (HD) and the General Education Board (GEB), both philanthropic branches of the RF that shared David H. Stevens as Director and John Marshall as Assistant Director.² Although the officers had clear educational objectives to pursue by including mass media under RF philanthropy, their initial approach was largely shaped by the conditions imposed by the motion picture industry in the U.S. and the political polarisations leading to World War II.

In April 1935 the RF Trustees meet to explore how to proceed in regards to including radio and motion pictures within the actions of the Humanities Program.³ This examination from the premise that “unquestionably the film is among the most powerful influences in the cultural life of the world today and it is therefore subject to careful evaluation of the services it renders”.⁴ The Board identified two inter-related areas of action: (1) to influence public appreciation, both on and through films, and (2) to improve the material resources involving educational uses of film. For the first concern, they acknowledged that “creative work has never run in advance of the critical spirit”, thereby implying that rising appreciation would have an impact on the quality of productions, and this will feedback to further develop public expertise.⁵ In regards to the second issue, they emphasised the need to work in schools both with instructional and entertainment films. But precedent caused the Board to think carefully about the means to achieve this goal, and they recognised that previous attempts to do so had failed given the lack of coordinated efforts between producers and educational authorities. The solution seemed to require a centralised agency that could direct the efforts from the different interested parties and to provide educational standards for the nation.

George F. Zook, then president of the American Council on Education (ACE), was already studying the establishment of such an organisation.⁶ Zook informed the GEB of the type of structure and functions adopted by the British Film Institute (BFI). The BFI had an advisory council representing the industry, educational organisations and informed public opinion, and it was committed to a set of activities that “range[d] from the preparation of scripts to the distribution of finished product at a low rental charge”.⁷ At this point, the Board referred to the establishment of the agency in a rather optimistic manner, since it could possibly draw further support from the federal government. They hoped for collaboration from the recently created National Archives, whose building “is to be a center for storing, copying and producing pictures of historical significance”, as well as from “the Department of Interior and other governmental agencies and educational groups that have used films for special purposes for a period of years”.⁸ The institute would help to select and maintain a national collection of films and also collaborate with the government for specific projects involving films. In a centralised fashion, such an organisation would coordinate efforts to respond “to the question of how to improve understanding on the part of the general public by direct methods”.⁹

Notwithstanding, less direct methods of influence and opinion-making were also considered. As the Board acknowledged, “every college and university community has its nucleus of persons that could be interested in a plan for rental and exhibition of a series displaying the artistic and technical abilities of actors and producers in various countries”.¹⁰ Again, they pointed at the British model of the London Film Society and the distribution operations of the BFI through its regional branches, which facilitated non-commercial exhibition based on membership fees.¹¹ The Board asserted the interest in promoting these practices with the remark that, as many of the present leaders of the British industry had been nurtured in such places, they can be considered “laboratories for the development of critical

judgement”. Although film societies already existed in the U.S., they were isolated initiatives and “not real examples of what is possible through a national organisation”.¹² John Abbott, then in charge of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) Library, with support from Iris Barry, had already formulated a national plan to promote specialised non-commercial exhibition and presented it to the Board. Accordingly, the latter stated that “the methods used by the Society for securing foreign films would be adopted, and through assured co-operation from representatives of the industry in the United States, the Museum would be able to obtain a sufficient supply of films of American manufacture”.¹³ If the project was successful, the exhibition programs would include a selection of both American and foreign films reaching to a large number of museums and colleges that were already willing to participate for an annual low fee in programme rentals. Once the system was fully running, they expected more educational and civic organisations to join, and eventually the Film Library could become self-supporting.¹⁴

Although for the RF officers the objective of using film as a means of civic education were clear, the implications for the programme seemed complex, given the novelty of the field and the different interest groups they would have to deal with.¹⁵ For this reason, they did not elucidate a long-term project at this point. They anticipated that “the plan for an American film institute, when fully formulated, may more properly go to the General Education Board, but [the plan] of the Museum of Modern Art is much more directly in line with the objectives of the present program in the Humanities”.¹⁶ It seemed for the Board that establishing a central operating agency for the educational community followed the lines and objectives of the GEB, which had been supporting schools under the ethos of applying science and technology to the education and betterment of American society. Yet the plan for the film society that MoMA’s staff was already surveying required a direct collaboration with the film companies that appeared more in line with the objectives of the RF Humanities

Division, MoMA's main supporter.¹⁷ To carry out a non-commercial exhibition and distribution project, MoMA's employees needed to convene with film companies and rights' owners in order to get hold of old and foreign movies for the screenings. Accordingly, the structural support and international orientation of MoMA could grant the necessary authority to the project in order to negotiate satisfactory deals for both parties.

The ACE plan for an American film institute was not materialised as such. Instead, several smaller projects presented by the ACE were approved by the GEB in June 1935.¹⁸ These projects aimed to inform and systematise existing resources on film for the use of educators. They resulted in publications such as *Catalog of Instructional Film* (1936), *Teaching with Motion Pictures: Handbook of Administrative Practice* (1937), and a bibliography of literature on instructional film, *Motion Pictures in Education* (1938).¹⁹ The last of the projects consisted on a survey of audio-visual equipment currently available at U.S. schools, addressed to identify what were the problems faced by schools in purchasing materials. After the publication of this survey film manufacturers and school representatives gathered to agree to a price decrease in projection equipment. As a result, many schools acquired 16mm film projectors that enabled them to expand and upgrade the number of non-commercial exhibition sites in the late part of the thirties, sites that were increasingly important for newsreel and documentary exhibition as the war was nigh.²⁰

By December 1935 the organisation of MoMA's Film Library was well underway, now with assured collaboration from the major American production companies and foreign offices. The prospects to gather and maintain a national collection of films that were initially conceived for the film institute were now subsumed to the Film Library project.²¹ In this regard, the Board kept on looking at the advances of British practices, for "it seems clear that certain phases of the work maintained by the British Film Institute for schools and for adult groups throughout Great Britain will be paralleled in this country". Nonetheless, as the plans

for MoMA's film collection developed, the general education tasks were soon transcended into a more scholarly and internationally oriented approach to film culture.²²

Empirical Foundations and Experimental Approaches

During the meeting in December 1935 the Board had made clear that the Foundation would not enter into production itself.²³ However, it was still not completely defined how the Communications Program fitted into the Foundation's targets. In January 1936, in an internal memorandum, David H. Stevens put the program's emphasis on terms of exploring the possibilities of the medium beyond entertainment. As he posited: "it is, indeed, almost as if the language had been used only for purposes of advertising: little by little its possibilities for other purposes would be recognised".²⁴ Therefore, the need of the programme "is to work out new techniques appropriate to purposes other than entertainment".²⁵ From such an exploratory approach, rooted in scientific and humanistic enquiry, the actions in film and radio could be better understood within the purposes of the humanities and away from commercial interests. But this tentative approximation still needed to have form and direction. For this reason, the fellowship programme seemed to best suit this purpose:

the selection of men of interests such as to assure its being directed toward serious purposes – men interested primarily in education, literature, criticism, or in disseminating findings of the social and natural sciences. While their experimentation would not lack direction, it would not be limited by a too narrow concept of its purposes.²⁶

Such selection of topics and interests would then assure that free experimentation would still concentrate on the realm of traditional arts and humanities, thus widening the popular outreach of traditional high culture through the means of film. Yet following the Foundation's actions in other areas, support in the new realm had to be guided by scientific principles, in this case, on the nature of film and its impact on the public. As a result, empirical studies aiming to unveil such principles were started, based "on the theory that knowledge of 'audience response' would help educators know better what they wanted from

producers who wished to make films for schools”.²⁷ Thus the GEB contributed almost \$200,000 to the ACE in 1935 for research on the psychological effects of instructional films. Such was an attempt to bring empirical understanding to visual communication, widening the scope of other research projects on radio and public opinion funded by the RF through the Communications Research Group.

Another GEB project attempted to use excerpted entertainment films to illustrate personal and social relationships to school children.²⁸ Led by the Progressive Education Association in collaboration with the Motion Pictures Producers and Distributors of America, this project was granted \$75,000 and lasted from 1936 until 1939. But entertainment films were inherently limited material for educational purposes, and the results satisfied neither producers nor educators. As reported later, “producers would not spend money to make good films if the films were not going to reach an audience large enough to pay for the operation”.²⁹ If Hollywood was to make “good” educational films, there were small expectations of recouping production costs. The reason for this was that distribution and exhibition of non-commercial films was rather restricted, disorganised and it frequently operated in a non-profit basis. This recognition added another reason to pursue philanthropic support for the development of infrastructures that could indirectly help to produce non-theatrical and educational films.

Support for Educational Film Infrastructures

Despite the perception that the conditions of the film industry “did not give opportunities for film experimentation beyond commercial and entertainment motion pictures”, the Foundation was clear in not getting directly involved with financing films, “unless the production had specifically experimental or educational value”.³⁰ Under this provision, an experimental production unit was located at the University of Minnesota where Robert A. Kissack, from the ACE Committee on Motion Pictures in Education, was already

in charge of the Visual Education Unit. The project was established in 1937 and received up to \$134,000 until 1941, the date from which it continued operating independently. This enterprise was granted the exception of actually producing films because it was placed within a non-profit educational institution and its immediate repercussion would be within the educational realm. Such a pioneering attempt to link education, research and film production was followed by other higher education institutions afterwards, thereby establishing the material and intellectual parameters for future educational and experimental film production at universities.

Towards 1938 the political situation in Europe was increasingly tense and the need to establish positions and to seal allegiances became more pressing. In this context, the coordination of communication between Britain and the U.S was facilitated through communication networks supported by RF philanthropy before the U.S. entered the war. In 1937, British documentary filmmaker Paul Rotha attended a conference in the U.S. on educational film. There he lamented the lack of systematisation of the U.S. non-theatrical distribution infrastructures, as well as advocated the production of sponsored documentaries.³¹ After that, other RF British fellows were appointed to visit and report on various U.S. film facilities and to provide advice on developing cooperation between the U.S and Britain in regards to non-theatrical films.³²

The first response to the demand for coordination of non-theatrical distribution within the U.S. territory was the Association of School Film Libraries, a project carried out by the ACE with support from the GEB. Between 1938 and 1941, the Board addressed over \$47,000 to create a central agency which aimed “to bring together the hundred-odd agencies distributing films to the schools in a central authority that would inform schools about what films were available and would also evaluate them”, thus covering some of the tasks that were initially devised for the American film institute.³³

But the need to facilitate the production of educational and sponsored film seemed to be urgent too, although it was not completely clear to the Foundation officers how to undertake this action. In March 1938 RF trustee Ernest M. Hopkins responded to a letter from Raymond B. Fosdick, then president of the Foundation, giving his opinion in regards to the responsibilities of the Foundation on the field of motion pictures.³⁴ After emphasising the powerful vividness of films, far beyond the possibilities of the print, Hopkins commented on the films produced by Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration.³⁵ He said that they were "too far over towards propaganda to be wholly justified", for the films publicised the government's own virtues with tax-payers money. But their humanitarian aims seemed better than the possibility of "some succeeding government of evil-minded Republicans or even Communists (that) can extend the principle and utilize funds in far greater amount and with far less integrity".³⁶

At this point, Hopkins saw the opportunity opening up "to establish an organisation whose non-partisanship and disinterestedness will be so generally recognized that its imprimatur will be the hallmark of integrity".³⁷ Thus he posed the question in terms of an appropriate and stable positioning from which the Foundation could respond to the urge for action in the field. He followed by commenting on a recent visit to Europe, reporting on his amazement "with some of the foreign propaganda films that I have seen and that are being distributed among the colleges in particular".³⁸ He acknowledged the technical skills and mighty persuasiveness in the Russian and the Spanish Loyalist films, and even noted that Mussolini appeared "much more convincing in the darkened auditoriums than it was in the public squares". After reflecting on the terms on which democracies and dictatorships had come to compete on, he concluded pessimistically:

unless somebody assumes the responsibility in a big way for occupying this field of the educational movie and developing it, it is going to be occupied by somebody else with motives quite different and with the possibilities of injury greater than I believe is commonly considered.³⁹

Provided this advice, Donald Slesinger's proposal to set up a consulting body for non-theatrical film was welcomed by the Board in August 1938.⁴⁰ The project was enthusiastically moved forward by John Marshall, whose persistent interest in replicating British activities in the U.S. regarding sponsored film production now could expand.

The American Film Center and Educational Documentaries

The American Film Center (AFC) aimed "to provide advisory and supervisory service in the production and distribution of educational films to agencies wishing to produce and distribute such films".⁴¹ Slesinger received two small grants from the RF Humanities Division during 1938. The first, for general expenses, and the second "for a study of the present and potential distribution and use of films for better Pan American relations".⁴² Whilst the centre was exploring the kind of projects it would be dealing with, further insight into organizational matters could be brought to it by John Devine, who had previously worked at the RF funded Committee on Public Administration at the Social Science Research Council. The Board had "picked up Devine at that point and sent him to Film Centre in London for six-months study, where he was thought the best man we had ever sent over".⁴³ Given the understanding gained by Devine during his internship in 1938, Marshall keenly recommended him as Assistant Director of the American Film Center if the project was further seconded by the Board meeting next day.⁴⁴

Finally, the American Film Center received in 1939 another \$60,000 grant for two years that got the centre fully running with Slesinger as director and Devine as assistant director. Amongst the centre's duties were sketching budgets, advising on content, reviewing or writing scripts and editing footage. Through Mary Losey, member of the AFC staff since August 1938 and one of the founders of the Association of Documentary Film Producers the same year, the centre recommended documentary filmmakers from the association's

membership to match the requirements of sponsors. Thus, the centre worked with a sort of “working guild”, coordinating film projects on issues like syphilis, nutrition and citizenship. These projects were mainly commissioned by government and federal agencies and dealt with public health concerns that were becoming more acute as the war was looming large.

In April 1939 Marshall and Slesinger went to Hollywood to study the tasks of producers, for “if films are to change for the better, change will presumably come about through the group which makes these decisions”.⁴⁵ Thus, the RF officer and AFC director embarked on identifying the parts of the filmmaking and distribution process where the role of Hollywood producers was crucial. Additionally, the occasion was fruitful to explore the attitudes of the industry towards issues relevant to educational films and to spot where the work of the AFC could fit in.

The officers observed that the success of enacted newsreels like *The March of Time* had surprised the industry. This led them to question: “Were audiences ready to take more than they were getting?”⁴⁶ Given the changes in the audiences and the decline in box-office profits, they pondered how the industry was going to adapt. Commenting on the large profits achieved by the film *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939), they observed that “success will move production into a new cycle and anti-Nazi films will become as general as screwball comedies a year or two back”. Thus they predicted “a cycle of patriotic films; or a series on South America”.⁴⁷

However, industry representatives seemed to be needing assistance in dealing with projects for educational films and some “informal commissions” were delivered to the AFC during the trip.⁴⁸ Such was a consulting task for which the AFC appeared well suited, yet the officers wondered “will the American Film Centre lose its independence if (it) accepts compensation from the industry for any service rendered?” The question, posed in terms of finance, is resolved in the same way: “at least, until confidence is fully established, the Center

must give without taking”.⁴⁹ The report finished by stating how “partly through accident, partly by intention, the American Film Center represents the documentary idea to Hollywood”. The AFC representatives showed Hollywood producers a selection of British documentaries provided by MoMA’s Film Library and they pointed out their influence on the British industry.⁵⁰ The officers concluded on the affinity of directions that Hollywood and AFC were taking, thus pointing to the possibility of collaboration between Hollywood producers and filmmakers towards the war effort.

The RF actions towards promoting film education and appreciation were largely conditioned by the specific conditions of the U.S. and the structure of its motion picture industry. Yet it managed to systematise much of the existing facilities and create new resources to promote the use of film in education. The programme was successful in stretching out the material capacities and public outreach of already established educational institutions such as museums, schools and universities, thus promoting cultural practices through non-commercial circuits. Moreover, the Motion Picture Program enabled U.S. representatives to participate in an international network concerned with educational film and film culture that was crucial to enable internal and external communication in the onset of World War II. These activities were also embedded into the pursuit of an empirical understanding of the psychological and social effects of modern mass communications, enquiries with practical applications that would also be important for the development of the social sciences throughout the twentieth century.

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Endnotes:

¹ Board of Trustees Meeting, April 10, 1935, pages 15-16, folder 50, series 911, Record Group (RG) 3.1 Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York (hereafter RAC)

² For an account of assistant director John Marshall's leadership in widening the RF interests in information systems such as libraries as to include film and radio during the 1930s, see William J. Buxton "John Marshall and the Humanities in Europe" *Minerva* (2003) 41, 133-153. Buxton's account is mainly based on the officer's diaries and oral history records held at RAC, providing relevant information of how Marshall's European trips and relation with RF fellows in Europe contributed to the establishment of the Communication Program. For more information on the latter, see also Gary Brett's *The Nervous Liberals* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999)

³ In *The Evolution of American Educational Technology* (Charlotte, North Carolina: Information Age Publishing, 2004) Paul Saettler argues that serious consideration about systematising film resources in the U.S. came after an international conference in Rome in March, 1934 on cinema and education. At this conference U.S. representatives gained insight into how European countries approach film education and appreciation without such a rigid distinction between commercial and non-commercial film, as it was practiced in the U.S.

⁴ Board of Trustees Meeting, April 10, 1935, page 15, folder 50, box 5, series 911, RG 3.1, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 16. The Board referred to the Better Films Council and the National Board of Review as models for action to improve public appreciation without exerting direct censorship. These agencies, established by liaison between the motion picture industry and civic reform groups, selected films and encouraged informed criticism of entertainment films.

⁶ Saettler (2004) states that Zook presented a first proposal for an American film institute to the Payne Fund, a philanthropy that had also commissioned the studies on the effects of motion pictures on children published in 1934. Zook, who had previously worked for the U.S. Committee on Information during World War I and later served as Commissioner on Education for F.D. Roosevelt until 1933, was one of the representatives of the U.S. Commission that travelled to the Rome conference. During that trip to Europe, Zook also visited the British Film Institute in London, which had been established in 1933. After the Rome conference, gatherings with educational organisations chaired by the ACE secured their support for the establishment of a national film agency.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹¹ *Ibid.* Following the example of the French cine-clubs, the London Film Society was established in 1925. Amongst the founding members was Iris Barry, an English film reviewer and crucial figure in the creation of MoMA's Film Library in 1935. The Society screenings and following discussions were attended by influential British producers and filmmakers like John Grierson, Basil Wright and Paul Rotha. It was also frequented by international filmmakers and critics that showed and reviewed the screenings. Its private character permitted the organisers to pay low fees to rent older films, as well as to present new films that did not always reach commercial distribution, such as the Soviet films, independent documentaries and the film works of avant-garde artists.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 18-19. Such methods implied making arrangements with foreign offices and film institutes to secure non-commercial deals with producers. For a detailed account of the creation of the MoMA's Film Library, see Haidee Wasson *Museum Movies* (Berkeley: California University Press, 2005)

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁷ Modern industrial values and internationalism were the guidelines followed by MoMA's expansion during the 1930s. Under such principles, more functional practices like film, photography, civic architecture and industrial design were included amongst more traditional artistic media like painting and sculpture.

¹⁸ GEB records on the ACE (folder 2131-2132, Box 222, Series 1.2, General Education Board Archives, RAC) contain Zook's proposal to the GEB for an American film institute, first presented in April 20, 1935, shortly after the Board's meeting. However, whilst the ACE Committee on Motion Pictures was waiting to hear from the Board, they presented a document entitled "Proposed Studies Relating to the Use of Motion Pictures in Education" in June 3, 1935, from which the interim projects emerged. Next October, Zook submitted again "A Proposal for the Establishment of an American Film Institute" but in the next Board of Trustees meeting in December 1935 no mention is given to it. Instead, the Board stated that the "use of the motion picture as a medium of improving public appreciation must develop, as in the case of radio, through cooperative relations with the industry. Production of films or of broadcasting programs is beyond the reach of philanthropic and educational organizations, but with the aid of the industry both radio and motion picture are open to non-profit use for cultural purposes" (Board of Trustees Meeting December 11, 1935, pages 32-3, folder 50, box 5, series 911, RG 3.1, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC). This statement suggests that the motion picture industry was not interested in helping to develop a centralised educational agency that could have power over production issues. Although in these records there is no extant evidence of the position of the industry towards the film institute, a similar view on this matter is stated by Saettler (2004, 233), and

Buxton (2001, 2). This could explain why some of the plans for the institute were not completely discharged but rapidly assumed by MoMA's Film Library by December 1935. Such was a shift from an educators-controlled project to one that could be also monitored by the motion picture interests present at the Museum's Board. The Board then included more industry-minded members such as the Rockefeller Brothers, who invested during the thirties in the production company RKO, and John Hay Whitney, who had invested in Technicolor development.

¹⁹ The first two books were authored by Edgar Dale, member of the ACE Committee on Motion Pictures on Education since 1934. He had been a researcher at the Payne Fund Studies, having published in 1933 the influential guide *How to Appreciate Motion Pictures*. According to Nichols (2006), Dale's progressive ideas made him one of the leading figures in film appreciation in the interwar period, for he aimed to counter censorship by training audiences' critical skills. By identifying both the films' social stances and technical deployments, Dale believed that film appreciation could have an impact in the quality of professional and amateur film production. Dale's views link both with Hugo Münsterberg's ideas on the intellectual appeal of specific film techniques and some of the policies for film appreciation undertaken by the RF. Similarly, his take on film can be identified in later criticism and productions that value the spectator's critical capacity to recognise technical deployments as well as his/her capacity to relate a film with other intellectual and artistic frameworks.

²⁰ The information on the ACE interim projects relies mostly on Paul Saettler's *The Evolution of American Educational Technology* (Charlotte, North Carolina: Information Age Publishing, 2004). The ACE archives are located at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

²¹ Board of Trustees Meeting, December 11, 1935, page 33, folder 50, box 5, series 911, RG 3.1, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.

²² *Ibid.* According to Wasson (2005), Abbott and Barry were appointed as RF fellows to attend an international film conference in England in summer 1936. They took the occasion to travel through Europe in order to examine foreign practices regarding film archives in places like London, Paris, Berlin, Stockholm, Warsaw, Moscow and Leningrad. During this trip, they found common interests with other recently instituted film archives, such as the National Film Archive (BFI, London, 1935) the Cinématèque Française (Paris, 1936) and the Reichfilmarchiv (Berlin, 1935). Although these places had varied operational practices, they all followed a spirit of international collaboration that eventually led them to set up the International Federation of Film Archives in 1938.

²³ Board of Trustees Meeting, December 11 1935, page 33, folder 50, box 5, series 911, RG 3.1, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.

²⁴ David H. Stevens, Inter-Office Correspondence, January 22, 1936, page, 1 Folder 50, Box 5, Series 911, RG 3.1, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC. The notes are prepared by HD/GEB director Stevens as "an attempt to get somewhat clearer the definition of humanities program in radio and motion pictures that was adumbrated in our talk on Tuesday".

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 1. Stevens points at "education" and the "general diffusion of culture" as those unexplored purposes. He assumes that these are devoid of commercial interest and therefore of higher human universal value. This neutralisation of the terms legitimises the policy-makers actions in the realm of film education and appreciation. Although he acknowledges that the techniques used by one or the other may be different, he is prevented from concluding that the effects of entertainment and educational film respond to different psychological principles. Instead, he recognises the need to explore this area from a rather tentative, empirical approach without making radical distinctions, since the separation "might impose an artificial - and unnecessary - limitation on experimentation", although on occasions such separation would appear clear depending on the nature of the project, *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ "The Rockefeller Foundation and the Film" Report prepared by Joan Ogden, Office of Publications, in 1964, page, 18. Folder 52, box 5, series 911, RG 3, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, and RAC.

²⁸ In previous years, similar projects had been attempted but they ended up aborted mainly by industry resistance. Seattler (2004) reports an antecedent undertaken in 1929 by the Committee for Study of Social Value in Motion Pictures. It aimed to distribute excerpted 35 mm films, but according to the author it failed due to opposition from the industry, limited projection equipment and chaotic distribution.

²⁹ "The Rockefeller Foundation and the Film". Report prepared by Joan Ogden, Office of Publications, in 1964, page 18, folder 52, box 5, series 911, RG 3, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.

³⁰ "Next Jobs in Film and Radio" John Marshall Inter-Office Correspondence, September 13 1938, page 1, folder 50, box 5, series 911, RG 3.1, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.

³¹ Paul Rotha enjoyed a RF fellowship in the U.S. in winter 1937-1938. During this time he researched and lectured at MoMA's film library and Columbia University. When reviewing the grants given in 1938, Marshall noted that Rotha's "visit was extremely useful in putting in touch with the British group, in a more or less professional way, Americans with similar interests". Marshall noted the possibility of creating a kind of international "working guild" with documentary professionals from America, Britain and France, looking specifically at organisations with such character that had already developed in England and France (John Marshall, Inter-Office Correspondence, January 19, 1939, pages, 1-2, folder 50, box 5, series 911, RG 3.1 Rockefeller Foundation Archives) After Rotha's visit, the Association of Documentary Film Producers was established; see below for more information.

³² John Grierson and Thomas Baird were two of these fellows during 1938-1939. Previous to his work at the Empire Marketing Board (EMB), Grierson had been a RF fellow researching mass communications at the University of

Chicago (1924-1927) and Thomas Baird, greatly interested in broadcasting, worked at the General Post Office (GPO) film unit and at the Film Centre in London where John Marshall had the chance to meet him. As a result from their U.S. visits, British and U.S. cooperation in non-theatrical film matters was explored, as in Baird's "Report on Distribution of British Documentary Films in the United States" and Grierson's "Documentary Film in the U.S.A and Distribution of British Films There". Grierson also presented to the RF other studies on the film activities of the Canadian government that eventually led him to propose the creation of the National Film Board of Canada in 1939. Copies of these reports can be found at Grierson's Archive at University of Stirling, Scotland.

³³"The Rockefeller Foundation and the Film". Report prepared in 1964 by Joan Ogden, Office of Publications, page 19, folder 52, box 5, series 911, RG 3, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC. The Association of School Film Libraries failed to become independent and the board discontinued its support in 1941.

³⁴Hopkins to Fosdick. March 18, 1938, page 1, folder 50, box 5, series 911, RG 3.1, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.

³⁵Hopkins refers to *The Plow that Broke the Plains* (Pare Lorentz, 1935) and *The River* (Pare Lorentz, 1937), films that, similar to the British documentaries of the EMP and the GPO, extolled social cohesion and the need of administrative infrastructure, in this case provided by Roosevelt's relief measures. These films reached commercial distribution and gained popular acclaim, leading to the creation of the U.S. Film Service by executive order under Lorentz's direction in August 1938.

³⁶Ibid., 2.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Donald Slesinger had been Law Professor at Yale and Dean of Social Sciences at the University of Chicago, where he got acquainted with the research done by the Communications Group on media and public opinion. He was appointed head of Education at New York's World Fair in 1939, where sponsored and educational documentaries were used extensively and gathered much public attention. He had also acted as a consultant for the New York Board of Health and had belonged to American Documentaries Films' board of directors, which was not a producing unit but a central planning agency.

⁴¹"The Rockefeller Foundation and the Film". Report prepared in 1964 by Joan Ogden, Office of Publications, page 22, folder 52, box 5, series 911, RG 3, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.

⁴²John Marshall, Inter-Office Correspondence, January 19, 1939, page 1, folder 50, box 5, series 911, RG 3.1, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC. By exploring the relationship between the Americas through film matters the AFC was engaging with some of the work done by Nelson A. Rockefeller at the Office of Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs.

⁴³Ibid., 2.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Marshall, Slesinger, Untitled Document, Hollywood, April, 1939, page 1, folder 50, box 5, series 911, RG 3.1, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.

⁴⁶Ibid., 5.

⁴⁷Ibid., 6.

⁴⁸Ibid., 8.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid., 9-10. In late 1939, the Association of Documentary Film Producers compiled the comprehensive series "The Non-Fiction Film: From Uninterpreted Fact to Documentary," including many of the American documentaries that had been shown at the 1939 New York World's Fair to a large public success. MoMA's Film Library arranged public screenings of these series from November 27, 1939 to January 6, 1940. According to Wolffe, (1995, 375) while the retrospective did not have a large attendance, it "generated favourable commentary in the press and shaped an emerging critical view of documentary as a genre with a discernible lineage, a record of distinguished achievement, and wide potential for future development."