

A Million Pictures.

Magic Lantern Slide Heritage as Artefacts in the Common European History of Learning



Report of Workshop 4: Evaluation of the project and setting the agenda for future research and documentation.

11-12 January 2018, Exeter, UK

Report by **Gill Moore, Exeter**

Prior to the formal opening of the conference participants were offered an optional tour of the Bill Douglas cinema museum on the Exeter University Campus.

The conference took place at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter and was formally opened by Camilla Hampshire, the Museum Director, who welcomed the delegates and reflected on the symbiosis between the museum's strapline of "Home to a Million Thoughts" and the title of the conference. Joe Kember followed her and thanked the participants for attending this fourth, and final, workshop of the Million Pictures project. The programme had already enabled access to 27,000 magic lantern slides through the LUCERNA database. He acknowledged the project's numerous contributors, in particular those of the Project Leader Frank Kessler, and of Richard Crangle who had uploaded many of the slides and organised the current workshop.

Panel 1 (14:15-15:30)

The first panel was opened by Jason Bate who outlined his research into the historical use of magic lantern slides in medical teaching. As these slides had been rendered disposable, probably by technological advances in the 1960's, and had not been recorded in the archives of the medical institutions which had used them, he had drawn on the "textual ghosts" which indicated their extensive circulation. His research into *The Lancet* had revealed that the value of photographic images, as teaching aids, had been recognised as early as 1858. Valued, in particular, for their potential to record and teach surgical procedures they were "active performers in disseminating knowledge", could be integrated into publications and, by the early twentieth century, were central to the sharing of medical

information. They were important in discussions of the treatment of facial injuries arising from the first world war and were used at meetings where they contributed to improved communication between medical professionals. Sadly few material traces of the lanterns or the slides now remained.

Karen Eiffler's paper was read in her absence by Richard Crangle. Her focus was on "the Great Gun of the Lantern" as a weapon for social reform and questioned the commonly held view of lanterns as a pre-cursor of cinema. She identified the use of magic lantern slides as an educational tool by the Church Army and the Co-operative Movement in the first decade of the twentieth century. She showed how these bodies used magic lantern slides to gain support for their causes by offering audiences sensory, intimate and inter-active experiences. As an element of a multi-sensory experience in a familiar environment they were combined with costumed parades, community singing, competitions, and "cocoa" lectures, through which audiences not only learned about topical issues from a source perceived as authoritative, but bonded as a community with shared ideals and experiences. Eiffler concluded that these participatory communal events encouraged patriotism and consolidated a sense of British national identity.

Michael Hammond spoke next; his paper, which addressed the relationship between the cinema provider and the local community created by the showing of Roll of Honour films, connected thematically with those of the two previous presenters. These films offered audiences examples of "practical patriotism" and raised local recruits to heroic status. As part of a "variety programme" of short films, with musical accompaniment, they drew visually on the Victorian format of formal portrait photography of living and dead subjects and relied for their impact on local knowledge of the subject. They echoed the educational role of the lantern lecture, and traded on the ennobling effect of the personal portrait, to convey ideas of the local and the exotic. Hammond contended that the portraiture of these still images was more powerful than a moving image but showed how the context of their display, in the "necropolis" of the cinema, linked them to the nascent film culture of the era.

Questions addressed to this panel engaged with the importance of private collectors in ensuring the survival of magic lantern slides and the problems of their survival where the topic had been one which was not of wide appeal to such collectors. A key comment reflected on the circumstances in which, although the slides have been lost or destroyed, the original photographic negatives may still exist.

Panel 2 (16:00-18:00)

Tony Lidington's engaging presentation examined how the "Rare" peepshows of the eighteenth century informed later popular visual entertainment; he described them as multi-sensory, immersive, theatre shows and illustrated his presentation with slides from his own recreations of the form. He introduced the concept of the "phantasmagoria", as a theatrical genre which engaged with the surreal and the gothic and required audiences' physical participation in a haptic experience. Defining it as opposing the passive form of cinema, he identified it, following Mervyn Heard, as an "optical spectre show" which embraced discontinuity, disorientation and surprise in a "gloomy" setting and which, historically, may have included electric shocks and drug taking! Connecting it to the widespread Victorian interest in paranormal phenomena, he claimed that the phantasmagoria aimed to "tease, alarm

and reassure". He concluded by inviting expressions of interest from potential co-operators in his plans to reintroduce this form of visual entertainment.

Jeremy Brooker was the next to speak and outlined his research into Henry Jackson Morton, a college lecturer at Philadelphia Technical Institute, who had to make the unusual choice between an academic career in science and an alternative one as a showman and magic lanternist. Known to posterity for his collaborative attempts to decode the Rosetta stone, he gave a series of popular, public lectures at the enormous Philadelphia Opera House. Morton's 'college' lantern had to match the scale of the venue and, exceptionally, could be illuminated by gas or the new electricity. Brooker proposed that such science lanterns linked directly to early cinematographs because they had separate lenses and light sources and explained that Eadweard Muybridge had progressed from using graphoscopes to display his moving images, to the use of Morton's college lantern as a zoopraxiscope whilst in Philadelphia. Brooker concluded his presentation with a fascinating demonstration of the range of ways a science lantern could be used; he showed how it could display colour and movement and allow students to watch an experiment being performed.

Lantern show (18:30-19:15)

In the evening, Nicholas Hiley gave his fabulous sea-themed lantern show at the RAMM gallery. The temperance hymn was especially enjoyed!

Friday, 12 January

Panel 3 (09:00-10:30)

The day commenced with a workshop session led by Sarah Dellmann, (Universiteit Utrecht), project coordinator of A Million Pictures, and Sabine Lenk, (Universiteit Antwerpen), PostDoc in the project. Sarah updated the audience on progress made on introductory manuals for users of the LUCERNA database and presented a new one on which she sought feedback. Those participants who used the manuals responded positively to their value. Sarah invited delegates to look at the new version she had recently circulated and encouraged them to contact her with any suggestions they wished to make. A discussion of design preferences for the web page menu format ensued and the target audience was debated.

Sabine, who is in charge of the Million Pictures guide for best practices of digitisation of slides, subsequently updated delegates on progress with that guide which is intended to be published as a website. She described its structure, the need for it to have an academic tenor and the necessity of constantly reviewing the content. She requested contributions of slides from participants' own work which could be used to exemplify the points being made. She explained her decision to use external links and "read more" tags instead of footnotes and listed the main exclusions from the site, in particular of commercial information which would only be relevant to specific geographical locations and risked becoming quickly outdated. Audience enquiries addressed website target audiences, the quality of colour reproduction on the site, and strategies for meeting the needs of different potential

web resource users.

The session concluded on a positive note with news of a substantial successful bid for funding for a new project; Frank Kessler, Sabine Lenk, Kurt Vanhoutte and Nele Wynants would lead the scheme to write a history of "The Magic Lantern and its Cultural Impact as Visual Mass Media, 1830-1940". Four million euros over a four year period, shared between the universities of Brussels, Antwerp, Louvain, Leuven, Gent and Utrecht, would focus on drawing together French and Flemish Material and contribute to the country's cultural history and international media historiography. The niche nature of Belgian magic lantern slides is key to the project and research questions will address how magic lantern slides were used, why they were used, what kinds of slides were shown, where they were shown, how the magic lantern conveyed meaning and how unique was the Belgian situation. A performance-based approach will frame the project's research methodology and the work will be divided into four packages which will address issues including: education and religion; iconography, visual strategies and narratives; and transnational perspectives. The project budget includes some funding to share with cultural partners to assist them to digitise their collections, for work with external partners such as LUCERNA, and to create an associated event each year.

Panel 4 (11:00-12:30)

Ian Christie opened the fourth session with a discussion of the use of early double projectors which could show either slides, or films, or a mixture of both. Produced, chiefly, by a maker named "Wrench" the shows at which these short lived pieces of equipment were used were often described as "living pictures" or "dissolving views" and Christie's work focuses on discerning any alterations in the balance between slide and film during the short period before they were superseded. His analysis of Rob Paul's brochure for his show "The Animatograph at the Alhambra" has revealed that slides substituted for a lecturer and were used to supplement the film when no lecturer was present; this was consistent with Paul's subsequent status as an innovator of on screen text after 1901. Animatography was also used by the Salvation Army in Australia and by Jehovah's Witnesses who constituted it as a method of conveying the foundation myth of their culture. Christie concluded with three questions that continue to concern him: how common were double projectors? Were they ever used in a theatrical format? Can it be assumed that the proportion of slide to film shifted towards all film shows with slides only used prior to the introduction of film titling?

Francisco Javier Frutos Esteban and María Carmen López San Segundo next described their research project which is investigating the use of magic lantern slides as educational resources for science teaching in Spanish secondary schools. Evolving from an earlier study, which had examined scientific education in Madrilenian secondary schools prior to 1936, the aims of the current project are to picture the scientific materials acquired for classrooms and laboratories and to determine the impact of this particular pedagogical innovation. It focuses on a heavily used, and poorly conserved, set of lantern slides deriving from the fin-de-siècle period and through analysis has identified the most frequently represented scientific fields as history, fine art and botany. The pedagogical approach deployed was almost exclusively factual, and presented graphic or photographic images with additional data, such as

measurements. Their research shows that many of the slides had been purchased from France as ready prepared sets of educational material but further sets of slides selected from the Biblioteca Virtual de Patrimonio Bibliografico [The Virtual Library of Bibliographic Heritage (BVPB)] suggest a possible Portuguese source. Frank Kessler responded to this presentation by reflecting on how such slides assisted Spanish efforts to address the difficulties of teaching numerous illiterate students. He suggested that many slides were produced outside Spain and then imported in a post Franco attempt to improve educational standards in the country.

The session was concluded by Ariadna Lorenzo Sunyer's concise paper on Ad Reinhardt's use of magic lantern slides in Art Education. Reinhardt had started out as a photographer before developing an interest in art history and visual culture . He created his archive of 12,000 slides from his original photographs and his magazine collection; it extended from images of urban architectural details and travel, to mundane objects and was originally not categorised or classified. His slides acted as a personal art museum and he used them not only to illustrate his lectures but also to "confuse and confound" his audience. By subsequently choosing to organise his slides according to shapes or uses of the images, e.g. a group of eyes or things that look like eyes, he defied art historical conventions and challenged its traditions.

Panel 5 (13:30-15:00)

Mary Borgo initiated the first session of the afternoon with an unusual approach to evaluating the impact of magic lantern slides. She proposed a methodology which combined techniques of geo-location with accounts of magic lantern performances to enable the precise locations of magic lantern shows to be established. She revealed that Victorian missionary and explorer David Livingstone presented magic lantern shows in Africa and explained that by matching information about his travels against physical features on maps of the area it is possible to identify where he presented his performances. As long as the latitude, longitude and location descriptions were available any similar journeys could be decimalised, digitised and matched against data already held on the LUCERNA database; this information could be used to create a map of the locations of the slides in LUCERNA and re-imported to the database. However while this process can give a good indication of where slide shows were presented, its disadvantage is that it cannot tell us anything about the audiences who watched them. Mary concluded with the suggestion that individual researchers should map their own projects in this way; this would gradually develop a more comprehensive picture of the locations of shows and fill in the gaps on the map.

Joe Kember presented the next paper which summarised his research into the international peregrinations of celebrity lecturers and their magic lantern shows. He explained that lecturing could be a profitable enterprise for those who had become well known for their achievements in other walks of life. Between 1894 and 1897 his exemplar, Anna Longshaw-Potts, M.D., established a popular series of illustrated lectures on "Women's Health and Hygiene" and toured the U.K. presenting a mixture of free and paying lectures. Insisting on female only audiences, her lectures combined education and entertainment and often attracted controversy by addressing topics which had previously not been

discussed openly in the presence of women, particularly those who were young and unmarried. Potts showed up to two hundred slides in each lecture and toured internationally. Kember explained that celebrity lecturers were often accompanied on their tours by their agents and expert projectionists; his work has revealed that some of the agencies which promoted magic lantern lecture tours handled numerous high-profile lecturers but suggests that this increasing professionalisation was a contributory factor to the eventual decline in the use of the magic lantern to illustrate the lectures.

John Plunkett then returned our attention to more domestic patterns of magic lantern use and outlined his research into local optician's participation in the circulation of magic lantern slides. From the 1820's, the London periodical press had begun to publish advertisements which showed that magic lanterns, and lantern slides, could be hired from optician's, photographers and fancy goods shops. They were promoted as popular family entertainment, particularly at Christmas and for children's birthday parties, and the equipment could be hired alone or with an operator. By the 1850's, this practice had spread more widely and the equipment for hire had expanded to include stereoscopes, chromotypes, gyroscopes and anorthoscopes. Aimed, initially, at individual event hire, different contracts for longer term hire began to emerge, sometimes including regular, free, changes of slides from the extensive catalogues, prospectuses, or libraries of the thousands of images which were available even in smaller communities. By the mid 1860's, these materials were being used in schools and ad hoc showmen had begun to advertise themselves as travelling lanternists. John noted that by the 1880s, and into the 1890's, prices for magic lantern performances had begun to fall, perhaps suggesting that the popularity of this mode of entertainment was waning.

Panel 6 (15:30-18:45)

Jenny Durrant opened the session with her perspective on how museums can use their magic lantern slide collections to engage with the public. RAMM possesses 4,700 images which Richard Crangle had been instrumental in adding to the LUCERNA database; the collection comprises slides purchased by the museum for educational purposes in the 1930's, a large group inherited as a photographer's own collection, and the Rowden collection. Created between 1910 and 1950, by a photographer friend of Frederick Rowley, the curator of RAMM; this collection includes unusual images from Rowden's trip to Mesopotamia between 1915 and 1918. Jen showed selected images of how the museum has previously displayed some of the slides and is currently examining possibilities for further development of the collection. Jenny disclosed that the museum possesses an unprovenanced megalithoscope, one of only about ten surviving examples of this rare optical device, which she is currently researching.

Ana David Mendes focused on the exciting development of the new Museum of the Moving Image in Leiria in Portugal. Opened in 2010 this bespoke, third iteration, of the museum was constructed with interactive spaces, educational facilities, and resources for researchers, and incorporates an audio-visual archive and magic lantern display. Taking the history of science and technology and the history of arts and humanities as its twin interpretive foci, its permanent exhibition comprises seven sections, one of which examines proto-cinema with its associated equipment and lantern slides. As part of an installation by contemporary artist Eunice Duarte, paper films for a lantern presentation on the history

of Portugal have been created and three new magic lanterns constructed, which audience members will be encouraged to operate as participants in the performance. Ana contended that these interactions between lanternists and film ensured that each performance thus became original and unique, and by recording the performances, new archives of intangible cultural heritage could be created.

Phil Wickham's paper also concentrated on the use of museum magic lantern slide collections. He described alternative ways of using these artefacts (other than by projecting them as slides). He emphasised the importance of the contextualisation and reinterpretation of the information which slides offer about, for example, the misplaced beliefs of a specific era. Images which we now find distasteful may offer valuable insights into the views of slide producers and their audiences and allow us to interrogate them, so it is important to recognise their place in the history of optical and entertainment. The questions which ensued addressed issues regarding the use of old or fragile slides or replicas and the need to communicate interest in the artefacts to a wider audience to ensure they will be cared for in the future.

In the final session of the afternoon Ine Van Dooren substituted an entertaining, metaphorical presentation for a conventional, conference closing address. Musing on the theme of change she modelled a sequence of cleverly crafted millinery to emphasise the series of changes initiated by the *Million Pictures Project*. Delegates were regaled by an "A.M.P. hat" adorned with optical entertainment devices, an "old archivist Hat", a "digital hat" complete with computer, a "director's hat", "top hat", "bowler hat", and an "inflatable hat". This astute combination of visual, metaphorical and literal tropes provided a fitting conclusion to a busy day of presentations and was warmly appreciated by an enthusiastic audience.

Lantern Spectacle “Magic and the Muse”

The closing event of the workshop was the fantastic lantern show presented in Exeter’s Barnfield Theatre, a venue originally constructed specifically for magic lantern entertainments. ‘*Magic and the Muse*’, presented by lanternists Jeremy and Carolyn Brooker, used an original nineteenth-century triple lantern, combined with the talents of multi-instrumentalists Richard Navarro, Nicholas Thurston and Miriam Gould to present a unique combination of music, performance and projection. The show included specially created images, original historic material, and a rare sequence of ‘pose slides’ projected onto a live performer, once used by the parents of the film actor Peter Sellers. It played to an appreciative audience in a packed house.



Workshop organisation: Richard Crangle, Joe Kember

Attachment: Programme of the Workshop

Thursday 11 January		
11.00	Optional group tour of Bill Douglas Cinema Museum	Old Library Building, University of Exeter Places are limited – please reserve your place by emailing Richard (r.crangle@googlemail.com). If you will not be in Exeter until later, the BDCM will be open for visitors on Saturday and Sunday, but without staff to show you round.
13.45	Workshop participants meet	RAMM Gallery 20
14.00	Welcome and introductions	RAMM Gallery 20 Camilla Hampshire, Director of the RAMM Joe Kember, University of Exeter
14.15	Panel 1	RAMM Gallery 20 Jason Bate, 'Paper Trails as Remnants of the Lantern in Medical Teaching' Karen Eifler, 'Lantern Performances in Religious and Socio-political Education: Sensation – Intimacy – Interaction' Michael Hammond, 'The Use of the Magic Lantern Tradition in Roll of Honour Films of the Great War in Britain'
15.30	Refreshment break	RAMM Garden Reception
16.00	Panel 2	RAMM Gallery 20 Tony Lidington, 'A Fantastical Phantasmagorical Phenomenon for the Twenty-First Century – Ghosts, Gauzes and Grandiloquence' Jeremy Brooker, 'The Magic Lantern as a Means of Demonstration: Henry Morton and the 'College' Lantern' (including lantern demonstration)
18.00	Drinks reception	RAMM Garden Reception
18.30	Lantern show	RAMM Gallery 20 Nicholas Hiley, 'Life on the Ocean Wave': a lantern show with maritime theme (show ends 19.00)
19.45	Dinner	

Friday 12 January		
09.00	Panel 3	RAMM Gallery 20
	Led by the Principal Investigators of the <i>Million Pictures</i> project, a structured audience discussion on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the outcomes of the project so far; – prospects and opportunities for future projects and other collaboration. 	
10.30	Refreshment break	RAMM Garden Reception
11.00	Panel 4	RAMM Gallery 20
	Ian Christie, 'Side by side: lantern slides amid early film' Francisco Javier Frutos Esteban and María Carmen López San Segundo, 'The Role of Educational Visual Resources in the Renewal of Scientific Education in Spanish Secondary School Classrooms in the First Third of the 20 th Century: The Case of Magic Lantern Slides' Ariadna Lorenzo Sunyer, 'Uses of the Slideshow by the Painter and Art Historian Ad Reinhardt'	
12.30	Lunch break	RAMM Garden Reception
13.30	Panel 5	RAMM Gallery 20
	Mary Borgo, 'Locating Lanternists: Tools for Geographic Analysis' Joe Kember, 'Global Lantern: Touring Lecturers and Their Agents in Australia and the World, 1880-1914' John Plunkett, 'Slides For Hire: Local Opticians and Lantern Performances 1840-1870'	
15.00	Refreshment break	RAMM Garden Reception
15.30	Panel 6	RAMM Gallery 20
	Jenny Durrant, 'Seeing the Light – RAMM's Collections in Focus' Ana David Mendes, 'Magic Lantern Performances in a Museum Context' Phil Wickham, 'Without the Limelight: Using Magic Lantern Slides in University Teaching and Research Today' Ine van Dooren, 'Hats' (panel ends 17.15)	
18.45	Buffet dinner	Barnfield Theatre, Barnfield Road
20.00	Lantern Spectacle, <i>Magic and the Muse</i>	Barnfield Theatre
	Jeremy and Carolyn Brooker, Miriam Gould, Richard Navarro and Nicholas Thurston present a fantastic combination of live music, performance and projection, including a rare demonstration of projection onto a 'living screen' using hand-painted slides once owned by the parents of the film actor Peter Sellers. Admission is included free of charge for registered workshop participants, but you will need to collect a ticket during the workshop as the event is also open to the general public.	
Saturday 13 January		
10.00	Million Pictures Research Team meeting	Devon and Exeter Institution, Cathedral Close
	All project members (agenda will be circulated separately)	
12.30	Sandwich lunch	Devon and Exeter Institution