In his posthumously published autobiography, Cecil B. DeMille explained that in 1914, as part of a greater effort to make more “authentic” movies, one of his assistants, Elizabeth “Bessie” McGaffey, went to the Los Angeles Public Library (LAPL) to find “books on costume, architecture, gunnery, or whatever subject I was dealing with in planning a picture.” She gathered so much material that her office “became crowded with books, and her time crowded with consulting them in answer to my questions.”¹ Both DeMille and McGaffey learned about the practice of visual research from their respective experiences in East Coast film production along with their backgrounds in legitimate theater where such methods had been used since the 1820s.² Despite his general description of “books” on various subjects, Hollywood researchers would primarily consult illustrated texts and many images clipped from a variety of ephemeral printed media. Such an array of images allowed filmmakers to see grand and detailed aspects of the world that had been created over the previous millennia, all of which helped them produce moving pictures viewers could recognize and trust.³

From the mid-1910s through the 1930s, nearly every Hollywood production company built and maintained a research library that engaged in visual research to make screen spaces their audience would recognize and believe. These departments hired large staffs to create and grow their collections of illustrated books, magazines, and newspapers, as well as photographs, postcards, cartes de visites, stereo-view slides, maps, building blueprints, technical manuals, prints of paintings, drawings, and many other ephemeral materials. Researchers would search for information widely, regularly scouring the picture collections of rival studios and consulting the picture collection of the LAPL, which was one of the largest and oldest most in the American
West. More than just gathering, organizing, and managing images, however, research departments helped Hollywood impart visual information to disseminate a familiar view of the world to its viewers through images of the world. By employing basic practices of library science, including collecting, sorting, labeling, and redistributing images, Hollywood researchers strengthened the resonance of cinema with spectators and connected cinema to earlier forms of visual understanding that antiquarians and artists had created over the previous four centuries.4

This article follows two nearly contemporaneous tracks, one in library science and one in Hollywood film production, that helped to create the films that audiences flocked to in the twentieth century and helped illuminate obscure topics viewers might not otherwise encounter. The growth of the film industry in Southern California in the 1910s coincided with developments in library science and a growing national movement to add picture collections to public and private libraries across the United States. Serendipitously, film workers began building their studio research libraries at the same moment the LAPL was growing in scale and services. Public librarians and film industry researchers shared methods and images to help develop a significant, if underappreciated, visual resource.

This reciprocal relationship was essential for the growth and survival of both institutions as it cemented pictures as bearers of valuable information. This article tracks the work of a cohort of librarians and research pioneers, including John Cotton Dana, D.W. Griffith, Cecil B. DeMille, Bessie McGaffey, Magnus and George Ingleton, Helen Gladys Percey, and Frances Richardson, all of whom laid the technical foundation for such visual planning work in Hollywood. While many of these innovators have been overlooked in grand narratives of the film industry, their combined work served as the foundation upon which Hollywood realism emerged and would thrive in the twentieth century. Furthermore, examining studio research
libraries in the early-twentieth century reveals an important alternative mode of creative
collaboration in cinema production that has never been adequately examined. This labor was
based on a library ethos of sharing information in which rival studios happily aided one another
by lending and borrowing materials for their respective productions. It was neither hierarchical
nor based in corporate interests; this work mode relied on a common search for information and
cooperation between a group of peers unconcerned by title, gender, or employer.

Public Libraries and Picture Collections

With the creation of the American Library Association (ALA) in 1876, public libraries began
moving from idiosyncratic depositories for books and other scholarly materials to standardized
centers in the community that sought to offer useful materials to people of all classes at no cost.5
Before the turn of the twentieth century, few libraries had open-stack shelving and were more
similar to university or private research collections with scholarly texts than the popular
literature and reference materials that would develop in the following decades. This changed
during the period from the 1890s through the 1920s as Melvil Dewey and his fellow reformer
John Cotton Dana led a movement to increase the development of library science and counselled
the country’s public libraries on becoming reliable local institutions that gave patrons access to
more verbal and visual knowledge in an effort to help build an increasingly informed citizenry.6

Dewey wrote very little about images considering he was mostly concerned with
organizing and simplifying patrons’ access to books, however in one article he explained the
value of an education “that comes from reading natural language: scenery, pictures, scientific
specimens, and all we lern [sic] by studying a thing or a picture instead of printed words about
it.”7 Dana, on the other hand, was a vocal proponent of the didactic qualities of images and
advocated for the inclusion of visual materials and picture collections as a standard public library
services. He was a populist who believed in the potential for all people, including the many poorer immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, African American, and Latino patrons who would become the fabric of American cities and towns in the early-twentieth century, to benefit from public education and acculturation in modern America.8

Dana became the librarian of the Central Library of Denver in 1889, which was located inside the city’s central public high school. There he realized the pedagogic potential of images to help students learn traditional narrative lessons, including great works of literature and biblical stories, historical events, and complex scientific topics that required diagrams or models.9 He believed libraries that merely gathered and lent books and private collections that limited access to their materials were insufficient to the needs of the era; he thought public libraries should offer patrons the most diverse books possible as well as collections of other media.10 He saw picture collections as an ideal way to foster a relationship between a library and schools, teachers, artisans, scientists, laborers, and other curious patrons who could use such resources.

In 1902, he moved to directing the Free Public Library of Newark—later renamed the Newark Public Library (NPL)—where he expanded his vision for broader access to books, including allowing patrons to browse open-stack shelves, establishing a collection of children’s books and materials, creating specialty collections for the many skilled trade workers of the city, and building collections of books in languages that could serve Newark’s immigrant populations. He also built a picture collection, expanding on efforts he had begun in his previous jobs, to help provide visual materials to educators, artists, and the diverse patrons of the city.

Because picture collections were a novelty for his colleagues, Dana described the many places where public librarians could find images to include in a library’s picture collection in a 1902 column:
They are in books, which have passed their usefulness, in magazines and weekly journals [...] when they have become a little out of date. They come in circulars and advertisements of all kinds. They are in odd numbers of subscription books and art journals which friends of the library send in. They are in literary journals, technical journals, architectural journals, trade journals.\textsuperscript{11}

Following Dana’s outline, a picture collection would be any ordered compilation of images, gathered by connoisseurs, curators, or clerks, that were clipped and organized into filing cabinets and later examined by library patrons, teachers, artists, and graphic designers of the city in a search for visual information about the world. These were not necessarily images created by elites or published in monographic art books; rather, they were the many visual representations that surrounded everyday people in the visual chaos of modern world.

For the NPL’s picture collection, clerks would clip images and paste these images to heavy-stock board they would sort into bins devoted to certain themes or subjects. Patrons could search for images by flipping through the bins before checking out the heavy-stock boards as they would with books (\textbf{figure 1}). Dana and his library staff attempted to create an encyclopedic collection of images that represented as many objects, places, and people as possible. The files for dogs, for instance, would include images of as many breeds as they could find from the previous centuries of illustrated material and art. A patron could find images of dogs sleeping in living rooms, dogs running in fields, dogs playing cards, work dogs, and advertisements for dog food. For artists, such a variety of subjects and images would help to inspire any number of other images of dogs they might create; for educators and other users, these images could help show the animals in a variety of contexts.

Organizing these pictures into groups of image content, rather than how an art historian might categorize them based on artist, period, or medium, allowed patrons to compare a wide range of images and pushed the collection to grow without limitations. The physical act of
flipping through images was not unlike browsing open-stack shelves wherein researchers could make other serendipitous discoveries; a picture collection also allowed users to examine dozens of images in a short timeframe without needing to locate different books and journals. By categorizing materials in this open-ended way, Dana tacitly acknowledged that the collection was not a fixed archive but an ever-growing resource to which new images could be added indefinitely. This belief in the importance of the unlimited development of collections continues to be a fundamental principle in public and private libraries to the present day.12

Dana explained that “[b]y pictures we are going to increase man’s ability to grasp the life that surrounds him and make education more common and, in the end, run more thorough.”13 While he never argued that one obvious demographic for picture collections would be illiterate patrons—a surprising silence considering how he embraced the diverse citizens of Newark without negative judgment—he assumed pictures could address viewers in a more universal way that disregarded issues of class, race, national origin, and language of individuals.14 Furthermore, in explaining how pictures showed the patron a “more thorough” world, rather than suggesting a “complete” understanding of it, again invoked the belief that a picture collection could never be entirely finished and would always be growing with new images.

Dana was certainly no alone in his desire to make public libraries an information center of a community, as he was part of a growing movement in the library field that was pushing for such a strong communitarian status. In 1876, in the inaugural issue of the ALA’s Library Journal, Worchester, Mass. library director Samuel Swett Green wrote about the importance of reference desks for patrons searching information. “A librarian should be as unwilling to allow an inquirer to leave the library with his question unanswered as a shopkeeper is to have a customer go out of his store without making a purchase,” Green explained.15 This belief in the need to help library
users with all their research needs guided picture collection staffs, so that patrons could find answers to their questions in text or images. If someone needed to understand the history of the Taj Mahal, for instance, the reference desk could help them find a book on its history or send them to the bins of the picture collection where they could find images of the structure. For Dana and many library directors around the country, picture collections offered clear answers to many reference questions at which descriptive books could only hint.

Around 1904, only two years after Dana first wrote about picture collections, the LAPL started building its own picture collection in its reference department. The library’s annual report explained that the “intelligent use of the nearly 8,000 selected photographs, covering nearly every branch of human activity, which can be graphically reproduced, is a highly important function of the reference work and is now being given due attention.” Angelenos were quick to use this collection, borrowing thousands of these images for use in the arts, architecture, and education. By 1909, the library proudly noted the importance of its picture collection and how useful it was to its patrons:

While all progressive libraries now make use of photographic and other reproductions of the greatest paintings and sculpture, and of the world’s foremost architecture, not only for Reference [sic.] but for circulation—this library was one of the first and is one of the foremost in this activity. It is also recognized as the leader in this respect in the whole West. It has a collection of over 8,000 such illustrations of art and architecture […] with an enormous public use.17

The nascent Los Angeles film industry, which began to relocate from the East Coast and Midwest in the early-1910s, would become a major patron of the library’s pictures for research in cinematic productions. In addition, studio research workers would begin to learn basic practices of library science from the LAPL’s librarians as they frequented their collections. One of the most important elements studio researchers discovered in the public library were
bibliographies that listed hundreds of books, journals, and other published sources related to a wide array of subjects and time periods. These listings simplified the discovery of printed material, which simplified the production of films, particularly improving the specificity of sets and costumes for the wide array of settings and time periods of Hollywood movies.

**Cinematic Research in Early Hollywood**

The research and use of earlier visual and material sources for the production of American films began around 1908 in productions companies around the New York-region and developed slowly through industry from there.\(^\text{18}\) In 1913, a trade press article suggested producer-director-writer Alice Guy-Blaché was using images to prepare for her film *Dick Whittington and His Cat* (1913), which was produced at her Solax Studio plant in Fort Lee, New Jersey, less than twenty miles from Dana’s picture collection in the Newark Public Library. The article explained that “[t]o make these sets, study and research were called for. Before she began the production, Madame Blache [sic] spent a good many days looking up old prints and studying the time [period].”\(^\text{19}\) She had moved to the United States from Paris, where she had worked for the Gaumont production company as one of the firm’s key filmmakers. There she worked alongside many filmmakers using visual materials, including famous paintings, as models on which to base their films. In one case, Georges Méliès, Alexandre Promio (working for the Lumière brothers), and Gaston Breteau (working for Pathé) all made short films based on Alphonse-Marie-Adolphe de Neuville’s painting “Les Dernières Cartouches” (1873) between 1897 and 1899. Guy-Blaché knew well that audiences could recognize visual references to great paintings on screen and would appreciate the time it took filmmakers to make them come alive.\(^\text{20}\) While her exact system of research remains unknown, it seems likely she would have made the short trip to Newark to
consult with its reference desk, its picture collection, and bibliographies of the film’s setting in medieval England to find images for inspiration and guidance. The fact the article explains how she took “a good many days” doing such work, in an era when short film productions might have only taken a few days to shoot, suggests she was careful in her process and tried to find as much material as she could, rather than relying only on one single visual source.

As visual research for movies grew from one production company to another, many smaller firms developed their own practices. In 1914, one major innovation in research arrived in another Fort Lee firm when William A. Brady, the owner of World Pictures, hired Eugenie Magnus Ingleton, known as E.M. or Magnus, along with an extensive library of illustrated books she had organized and managed with her husband George, to create the first in-house research library on the premises of a film production company—effectively bringing a reference desk to the lot. Brady viewed the use of a private collection of books and sorted pictures, along with a reference manager familiar with the collection, as one solution to the growing desire by audiences for an improvement in films and saw the time saved by not leaving the firm’s gates as a bonus in efficiency. An article written several years later explained how “Mr. Ingleton heard directors express a need of an authoritative research library for the Motion Picture Industry [sic], saying that for the want of the proper and correct information there was great lack of detail in the screenplay.” Magnus Ingleton explained in a first-person account that she had created:

what I hope will prove a valuable, though never completed, Library of Reference Department. Pictures and sketches of everything under the sun, at all periods, and at all times, I am collecting and classifying, so that directors wanting helpful ideas, for scenes, costumes, locations, historic dates or detail, will find several sketches or pictures of whatever they seek.

This optimistic and exuberant statement suggested that movies could be both entertaining and intelligent and that any film setting could be carefully recreated with details that helped them
look like the world they represented. The library she described had originally been created by George, who had gathered materials during the previous decades while producing and acting in plays throughout Britain and America. World Film knew that promoting an in-house research library in the trade press would suggest to critics and audiences that the firm was making important and refined movies. To Brady, the suggestion of seriousness that would emerge from using such a collection was as valuable as the information that emerged from it.

There are three elements from Ingleton’s description of her work that would continue to be significant to researchers for the next fifty years—all of which echo Dana’s writings on picture collections. First, she explicitly connected the search for knowledge and her ability to find such details to images rather than words. Second, she mentioned that her library would never be complete. The notion of gathering materials of “everything under the sun” was an important sentiment that researchers would repeat for over the course of the next decades. Finally, she indicated that a key part of her work was to classify the visual material she gathered, highlighting how the materials she found for one production could be reused for later projects. While they had no specific education in library science, the way she and her husband organized the collection made it easier to use and, as a result, more valuable to the filmmakers with whom they would work.

On the West Coast, one early adopter of research and library methods was D.W. Griffith, who, aside from his creative and technical achievements, was a major force in the formalization of the business of filmmaking and the standardization of production methods. He relocated from New York to Los Angeles in the early-1910s to set up his own production company and to produce his large-scale racist and revisionist Civil War epic The Birth of a Nation (1915). In addition to creating the film’s bigoted narrative and portrayals, Griffith included citations of the
specific books he used for research on the screen. Such title cards appear in scenes with historically significant passages, including the Appomattox Courthouse surrender scene, which was based on an illustration in *Campaigning with Grant* by Col. Horace Porter (figure 2, 3, 4), and the design for Ford’s Theater in the Lincoln assassination scene, which was taken from an illustration in *Abraham Lincoln: A History* by John G. Nicolay and John Hay (figure 5, 6, 7). The intertitles described each scene, mentioning the source of the information before dissolving into tableaux vivants that copied many of the material elements from the published images.

No evidence remains about where or how Griffith’s production team found these images, though it seems likely, from several descriptions of their search for sources that they worked with reference librarians at the LAPL where they certainly would have encountered bibliographies on Lincoln and the Civil War. Actor Joseph Henabery, who played the President in the film, claimed he gained an advantage over other men looking to play the role when he “went down to the public library, looked up several books on Lincoln, and […] studied his pictures,” for guidance on his costume, makeup, and posture. Most likely, he examined books of portraits of the president by Matthew Brady. In the Lincoln assassination scene in the film, editor and later feature director Raoul Walsh played John Wilkes Booth with disheveled hair and a mustache, which likely inspired by an iconic carte de visite of the actor-assassin (figure 8, 9), a copy of which would have certainly been in the library’s picture collection. Viewers in 1915 would have known these images from their wide circulation in the popular press and other visual media, and these references would have helped the audience believe what they saw on screen considering how often they were republished; had the cinematic portrayals looked different from these photographs, spectators would have doubted the greater verisimilitude of the film, potentially dampening their enthusiasm and making the film less popular and profitable.
Actress Lilian Gish also wrote about the visual research for *Birth*, explaining how Griffith relied on several other illustrated books including Harper’s *Pictorial History of the Civil War*, Mathew Brady’s *Civil War Photographs: Confederate and Union Veterans—Eyewitness on Location*, John Nicolay and John Hay’s *Abraham Lincoln: A History*, and Frank Leslie’s *The Soldier in Our Civil War: A Pictorial History of the Conflict 1861-1865*. Assuming this specific list is correct, it seems likely Griffith found these more scholarly books through the assistance of the LAPL’s reference desk and the bibliographies the library maintained as standard practice in the era. Part of his being an enterprising innovator meant he found efficiencies where he could and would have relied on the public library to do heavy lifting of research in the years before he hired a staff specialist.

While the research work for *Birth* was decentralized and somewhat piecemeal in nature, Griffith’s next film, *Intolerance* (1916), found his production associates carefully compiling images into a research scrapbook. This innovation put research in the hands of two workers, Henabery and R. Ellis Wales, both of whom would have to spend time away from the physical production as they visited libraries to find visual information. It made sense for them to perform research considering Wales worked on the film’s costumes and sets and Henabery, who would work as a first assistant director and second unit director while also acting in a small role, had experience working with reference librarians tracking down sources from his work on *Birth*. Still, considering neither one was trained as a researcher or librarian, it seems likely they relied on assistance from the LAPL to track down sources. In the case of the scrapbook, each of the 187 numbered pages contained between two and ten images from antiquarian books of ancient architecture and material culture, or nineteenth-century paintings of ancient Babylon, Assyria, and other cultures in Mesopotamia (*figure 10, 11, 12, 13*). Wales and Henabery organized the
book by pasting images related to a specific theme or type of object on each page, a practice quite similar to Dana’s instructions for maintenance of a public library’s picture collection—possibly suggesting a correspondence with public librarians who understood how to practically employ such images.

In advance of making the scrapbook, Henabery gathered a “shelf about fifteen feet long, crammed with books,” and sought the advice of outside experts.27 One illustrated source for a large number of the scrapbook’s images was the academic book *The Civilization of Babylon and Assyria: Its Remains, Language, History, Religion, Commerce, Laws, Art, and Literature* by Morris Jastrow, Jr., an American scholar of Semitic languages and cultures at the University of Pennsylvania.28 There is no way two men in film production would have found this source without the help of an LAPL librarian or bibliography. Despite the creation of the scrapbook, there were still other production associates who continued to seek visual sources for the film, including cameraman Billy Bitzer who helped to gather pictures. He later explained that he “[b]ribed a local librarian (with a box of candy [or] silk stockings […]) to dig up material for *Intolerance*. [He m]ade copies of engravings, etc., which Griffith went over.”29 It remains unclear if Wales, Henabery, and Bitzer used the Central Library downtown, or the Hollywood branch located at Hollywood Boulevard and Ivar Avenue, as both were less than five miles away from the Griffith plant.

When these large-scale films set in the past became such massive financial, technical, and creative success, other filmmakers looked to Griffith’s production process and tried to emulate it. One such producer was Carl Laemmle, who also emerged from the filmmaking center of Fort Lee when he had several small firms before consolidating them into the Universal Films Manufacturing Company in 1912. Laemmle’s associates at Universal, including the West Coast
general manager H.O. Davis, saw how the visual research Griffith’s team undertook improved their film and believed that similar work could also help their movies. Like Brady, they also believed that having a private reference desk and research materials located on the lot managed by a dedicated staff member was more efficient than requiring craftworkers and scenarists to venture around the region looking for source materials as Wales and Henabery had done. In the summer of 1916 Universal hired Magnus and George Ingleton to move across the country and work in its Universal City plant, where she became co-head of the scenario department and he became the director of research. The library George brought from New Jersey along with his experience at World Film, and his past work in legitimate theater, made him an ideal manager to bring greater efficiencies to Universal’s prestige films.

On the West Coast, George managed the library in a stand-alone building into which he set up his “large private collection which [would] serve as the nucleus […] to which he would add] all books of reference pertaining to photography, costumes, architecture, art, literature, and such books as have been published pertaining to the cinema art.” Considering that Davis hired and promoted many women into management roles at the studio and that research and library work would soon become associated with women’s work, it is interesting that it was George and not Magnus who was hired in this library capacity. This decision makes more sense, however, when considering George’s familiarity and experience with the collection. Ultimately, what was most important for his hiring was the fact that he was married to Magnus, whom Davis placed in the head role of a more prestigious department—making George the spousal hire rather than his wife. Their tenure at Universal lasted two years before they left the studio in 1918 and took their collection of books and visual materials with them.

Seeing the results of the work by the growing cadre of researchers in Hollywood along
with the magnificent films they helped to make led the trade press to cover such collections and their managers at the end of the decade. In one example, a 1919 feature article examined the Ingleton library and the research services George, who had still not found a comfortable home for his materials, could perform. The article described the collection in detail, explaining that it was “indexed [so he could] put his hand upon the required knowledge within a very short time.” The piece also mentioned how it included “indexed portfolios which contain prints and steel etching of […] the exteriors and interiors of places of interest […] One portfolio filled with Dickens’ characters would hold the attention for hours of a lover of such characterizations.”

Not only did this article promote the many areas of visual interest the library could help producers insert into their movies, but it highlighted the systematized order of the books and pictures that could help save time and money in productions, a clear example how library science was becoming more standardized in studio research methods. This article signaled the change in significance of the Ingleton library from being a special collection due to its large size and completeness to one that was remarkable due to its basis in science and efficiency—which also characterized similar changes in the business of Hollywood production in the same period. It no longer mattered that it was one of the biggest private collections of visual materials, but that those materials could improve revenues through time savings in creativity.

By the mid-1920s, Ingleton, who had spent seven years working as a journeyman in the industry, realized his services as researcher had become somewhat common and replaceable and that his organized collection was more valuable as an asset for a studio to purchase. Cecil B. DeMille, whose production unit was based at Paramount, was one producer he approached with the proposal for the sale. In March 1925, the filmmaker wrote a memo to McGaffey to ascertain whether the thousands of illustrated books and the half-million clipped and organized images in
Ingleton’s collection would be useful to their film unit. After examining its contents, she responded that it was “completely indexed, catalogued and very valuable,” although it was too expensive. She explained that if she spent half of the $10,000 asking price in Europe she could “knock the spots off all the libraries in the business!” By the mid-1920s, research libraries had become a commodity whose contents could be assessed and appraised as if they were the land on which the studios stood.

Two of the most important words in McGaffey’s appraisal were “indexed” and “catalogued,” echoing the 1919 promotional article about his collection. The scientific aspect of the collection’s organization meant that Ingleton had become separable from his collection and that his labor was replaceable while books and materials had become essential. This followed a greater movement in Hollywood production toward more efficiency and the creation of a clear production process that could grow beyond the knowledge of any individual—much like any public library. McGaffey suggested that the library she had assembled over the previous decade could also be grown and further improved with the addition of more illustrated books and more indexed images. She believed the library could always be enhanced with new visual resources—a sentiment like that of Magnus Ingleton in her article from 1915 and John Cotton Dana regarding his picture collection.

The Fox Film studio ultimately purchased the Ingleton library in 1926 for his high asking price and he became its first head of research. The studio had not previously had a research department and saw this collection as a way to cheaply and quickly buy many visual materials which might have otherwise been time consuming and expensive to purchase individually. The studio valued these materials that could offer “information dealing with people, customs, modes of living, habits of thought, dress, architecture, transportation and scenery with which the motion
picture maker may come into contact.”39 Studio executives saw value in a ready-made collection that initially came with a man who understood the work of finding pictures in it.

Reciprocity between the LAPL and Hollywood researchers

As McGaffey’s interest in the indexing and cataloging of the Ingletons’ library shows, library science was firmly a part of film research by the mid-1920s. Several events in the previous decade show the evolution from the rather artisanal study of film settings by Alice Guy-Blaché to more the formalized, reciprocal relationship between the LAPL and film researchers in this early era of Hollywood production. One of the first signs of this association occurred when the Hollywood branch of the LAPL arranged to circulate books to the film studio over the Cahuenga Pass in 1916, the same year that George Ingleton became head of research at Universal40 While this arrangement was part of the greater efforts by Carl Laemmle and H.O. Davis to create a small-town feeling at Universal City where workers and residents could have access to books from a proper public library, it was also a way for George to access illustrated sources his library lacked.41 This shuttle signaled the growth of the LAPL into the San Fernando Valley as the city of Los Angeles expanded north and westward, and it showed how Laemmle’s studio was a logical destination for library materials.42

Also beginning in this period, the LAPL’s library school—which opened in 1891 and operated until 1932—began having alumni working in studio research libraries.43 In the library school, students learned important methods to improve the efficiency of Hollywood research. The curriculum focused on the practical knowledge librarians would need in their daily work, including ordering, classifying, and sorting books, creating, using, and updating bibliographies, gathering and organizing collections of periodicals, and bookbinding. These courses would help
graduates who became Hollywood researchers find information by creating and using bibliographies of pictorial media, assemble scrapbooks, and sort or lend illustrated books and pictures between studio libraries. While the school did not yet offer specific classes about creating or maintaining picture collections, press accounts make clear that library students learned about such work through the relationships between LAPL librarians and their film studio counterparts.

In 1918, a “system of indexing and retaining pictures conceived and installed in the Lasky library by Elizabeth McGaffey [was] adopted by the Los Angeles [public] libraries as an aid to motion picture companies who use the libraries for research work in connection with preparing settings, costumes, and customs, in various period of the United States in foreign lands.” She had learned how researchers around the film industry were some of the most active patrons of the library’s picture collections, that the library would be interested in an efficient organizational system in general, and that her fellow researchers would appreciate a system created through practical work rather than untested theories of behavior. It is important to note that the LAPL, in an effort to make their materials more easily accessible to more patrons, adopted this indexing system developed in the film industry rather than from inside its walls through standardized library science. In this important period of growth for the library system, managers welcomed helpful practices wherever they could find them, regardless of their origin.

Less than a year later, an article in the film trade press indicated that one class in the library school had visited the Lasky studio research library to view the “filing system used for illustrations.” The article explained how the organizational system McGaffey created was “accurate and simple.” It stated that Eleanor Jones, the librarian for the Hollywood branch, joined the students to learn McGaffey’s systemization methods. Not only would Jones have
known McGaffey from the researcher’s frequent visits to the branch collections, but Iva- Ette Sullivan, who had been working in the library with McGaffey since 1917, had previously worked at the LAPL with Jones. Sullivan would have helped strengthen the relationship between the library and the studio and would help build the librarian ethos of sharing materials and methodologies that would characterize Hollywood research in the decades to come.49 Such a visit shows how important studio research departments were to the standardization of picture collections for the LAPL and how significant it was for budding librarians to learn the needs of filmmakers in Southern California. After only about six years in Los Angeles, the film industry had already become an important influence on the public library.

Back East in the New York area, where some studios still maintained production operations, research library improvements were also standardizing work and applying library science techniques to their collections. A trade article from 1920 announced that Paramount’s East Coast plant in Long Island City had created a research library “to furnish all of the wide range of information necessary for the making of more accurate, interesting, and beautiful motion pictures.”50 The department was created by Pauline Peyton Forny who had “a number of years of experience in the Library of Congress” and she was “assisted by Miss Gertrude Koch, formerly of the Newark Public Library.” Coming from these two libraries, they would have both come in contact with picture collections; Koch had worked directly with John Cotton Dana and previously helped filmmakers in the New York region, including those from Fort Lee companies, find visual sources. Paramount saw value and efficiency in mirroring McGaffey’s systematized work modes in her Hollywood department in their East Coast offices. The way the research process had evolved over the previous five years on the West Coast, through the collaborations between researchers and the LAPL, was becoming the standard process for all domestic
filmmaking.

The article also explained how a “modification of the Dewey Decimal System [DDS] will be utilized for numbering and classifying the books,” of which the vast majority were illustrated. There is no doubt that this decision was influenced by the work experience of Forny and Koch who worked with different classification systems in their previous jobs. Forny would have used the Library of Congress (LOC) system, a standard in university and research libraries that held large numbers of books on unusual subjects, and Koch would have the DDS, which became the standard for local lending libraries along with primary and secondary school collections with fewer scholarly books. With such a universal mode of organization, it was easier for researchers to find books—considering standard public library bibliographies included their DDS numbers—keep track of books and images sent out on loan, and simpler for researchers from other studio libraries to make requests. Furthermore, the choice to use DDS, which would become the organizational standard for film industry research libraries, was logical considering most of their workers with library experience came from school or public libraries and would have been familiar with using it.

This standardization movement resurfaced again six years later in 1926, when George Ingleton unexpectedly died in a car accident and Hazel M. Knott became the new head of the Fox library. One of her first tasks was the “re-cataloging” of the collection. “The Dewey Decimal System, used in public libraries, [was] installed and material in the books [was] indexed according to a corresponding system.” Ingleton had created and used his own organizational system and after his death it turned out to be somewhat particular to him and difficult for his replacement to master. Considering studio libraries were interested in sharing research materials, the simplest way for them to work was for them to use a common system rather than each having
their own idiosyncratic one. The arrival of standard library science protocols in Hollywood libraries helped to move visual research from its artisanal origins tied to individual researchers to more a practical one that could give a much wider view of the visual world that could be shared and grown more easily.

To tackle research work for more complex films, studios needed standard practices that allowed for the gathering of more visual material from a wider variety of sources. This required more repeatable processes beyond finding of piecemeal images, as Griffith’s associates had done. From the late-1910s, it was standard practice for studio research heads to write articles in library journals and film industry publications about the methods and holdings of their departments, which helped to spread technical knowledge about research as it promoted the excellence of their respective companies. As these standardization practices spread through the industry, research departments also grew physically on studio lots, which led to a search by many research departments for more space; McGaffey’s library, as one example, moved into its own new building in 1920, an impressive expense for a support and planning department that many have ignored.

In 1921, Helen Gladys Percey, a 1917 graduate of the LAPL’s library school, taught a course at the LAPL library school “concerned chiefly with the needs of picture studios” that included instruction on “art books and picture collections.” Considering that the library school was training its students to work in the Los Angeles region and that many of them would work in the research departments of film producers, it was logical for the school to create such a class. Studios needed researchers who knew how to find illustrated books, clip images to build picture collections, and effectively distribute these materials to filmmakers. Percey worked in the LAPL Hollywood branch from 1916 to 1919 where she assisted many studio researchers, including
George Ingleton, McGaffey, and Griffith’s associates, learned their methods, and possibly introduced them to bibliographies that could help improve their work. In 1925, Percey began working in Paramount’s research department as an assistant to McGaffey. Later that year, when McGaffey transferred to work exclusively for Cecil B. DeMille’s production unit, Percey took the reins of the Paramount library.

One of Percey’s most significant early collaborators was Frances Richardson, who was also a graduate of the LAPL’s school where she happened to have been in the class that visited McGaffey at the Lasky studio in 1919. Richardson took her first job as the children’s librarian in the Fresno Free Library where she worked with its picture collection, following the standard methods for such departments developed by John Cotton Dana. By 1923, she returned to the LAPL as an attendant in the Art Department where she continued to handle prints and illustrated books. There she worked with Percey to give lectures to library school students on managing picture collections and working with picture-based art books in the library school. Following George Ingleton’s death in 1926 and Hazel Knott’s brief but organizationally important management of the collection, Richardson was hired as head of the Fox Films library in January of 1928. It is not only important that Richardson brought her training from the library school, but also that she understood how to manage and grow a primarily image-based library. While she was able to create and use bibliographies and knew about organizational methods, she also understood how to accurately organize images.

While cinema scholarship has traditionally examined studio management and workflow through a labor-efficiency lens as factories of creative output in which an archipelago of companies protected their finances and talent, reexamining departments like research libraries from the mid-1910s through the 1920s and beyond shows a different, less hierarchical, and
less corporate work ethos. Visual researchers in Hollywood were unconcerned with the institutional borders of their studios than with expanding their abilities to find information throughout the network of borrowing and lending that characterized American public librarianship from the late-nineteenth century. No other area of Hollywood film production allowed for such an exchange of materials free of contracts. While studios had always lent actors or directors to rival studios, such occasions were guided by legal agreements and limited exchanges of people or money; research libraries constantly searched for materials in rival studio productions, borrowed them, and copied them for later use. Such camaraderie between companies was unusual in the corporate and legalistic climate of the film industry.

Research staffs worked within a reference-desk worldview they learned from the Los Angeles Public Library, where the essential goal focused their work on answering all inquiries from filmmakers and craft workers by finding and sharing visual sources and information. The reciprocal relationship between early studio researchers, the growing LAPL, and one another helped each strengthen their collection based on shared work methods and systems of knowledge transmission. Hollywood research subscribed to a concept wherein information acquisition was the goal—a sharp difference from most other areas of studio work that fixated on artistry or corporate profit. There is scant evidence showing studio executives from the 1910s through the 1960s understood how broadly researchers shared their individual picture collections; considering the conservative vision seen in other studio business, there is a chance such work would have been curtailed if corporate managers knew the extent to this inter-company collaboration.

2 Two important innovators in this area were star producer-performer Charles Kemble and the costume designer James Robinson Planché. For their 1823 production of Shakespeare’s “King John” they worked with antiquarians to
research period-appropriate costumes by examining effigies in churches throughout England and in illuminated manuscripts. This historical research would become known as “antiquarian theater.” For more information on such practices, see Nancy J. Doran Hazelton, Historical Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century Shakespearean Staging (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1987), 36-37.

3 American philosopher Nelson Goodman interrogated the concept that repeated exposure to an image would make viewers believe the picture is true, noting that expressing how “a picture looks like nature often means only that it looks the way nature is usually painted” (Nelson Goodman, Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols [Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1976], 39). Art theorist W.J.T. Mitchell later refined this notion, explaining that “‘realism’ cannot simply be equated with the familiar standard of depiction but must also be understood as a special project within a tradition of representation, a project that has ideological ties with certain modes of literary, historical, and scientific representation” (W.J.T. Mitchell, Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 73).

4 Studio correspondence generally referred to “research departments” and “research libraries” interchangeably. While some research workers had formal library training most did not, leading those in research departments to be called “researchers” or simply “workers.” These linguistic guidelines are reflected in this article.


8 For a deeper analysis of Dana in the Progressive movement, see Ezra Shales, Made in Newark: Cultivating Industrial Arts and Civic Identity in the Progressive Era (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rivergate Books, 2010). Dana’s views could easily be criticized for their lack of perspective of social class structures or how they rejected people retaining cultural legacies, however, for the purposes of understanding his views on picture collections, his writing is best understood as being well-intended and typical of the Progressive Era’s views of social uplift. He was shortsightedly interested in creating library practices that could help educate a maximum number of people.


10 One example of the private library collection that limited access to its materials in a way Dana rejected was the Boston Atheneum. For an excellent examination of how women were originally barred from membership, see Abigail A. van Slyck, “The Lady and the Library Loafer: Gender and Public Space in Victorian America,” Winterthur Portfolio 31, no. 4, “Gendered Spaces and Aesthetics” (Winter, 1996): 221-242.

11 John Cotton Dana, “The Age of Pictures,” The Call, August 10, 1902, Newark Public Library scrapbook.

12 In 1931, S.R. Ranganathan, a librarian based in Madras, India, wrote The Five Laws of Library Science, which has become one of the most significant foundational texts of library science. The fifth law concisely stated that “a library is a growing organism,” which clearly echoes a position Dana also promoted. While there is no evidence the work of Dana influenced Ranganathan in any way, it is important to see how the methods promoted in this early era of the NPL were part of a larger international movement for library growth.

13 Dana “The Age of Pictures.”

14 It seems Dana did not adequately appreciate the power of images and how they could easily manipulate viewers to believe the dominant cultural ideology that created them. In the case of the many working-class and immigrant users of such images, he failed to see how exposure to pictures from the dominant press organs might have instilled in a patron a worldview that contradicted their best interests. That is to say, in his effort to expose Newarkers to more information to help them better engage in the world, Dana might have presenting them with imagery from the dominant business culture that did not value their work or minority culture.

15 Samuel Swett Green, “Personal Intercourse and Relations Between Librarians and Readers in Popular Libraries,” Library Journal 1, 1876.
was never explained. In 1940, Newhall became MoMA's first curator of photography. See, Beaumont Newhall,
fit better into the context of the show. Why a librarian would need to be bribed to perform a basic part of their job
quotation was changed to say Bitzer bribed the librarian for photographs on
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1916; “Sifted from the Studios—Pacific Coast Notes,”
productions rather than to the greater needs of the studio (“All Aboard for Universal City,”
Weber Howland, a sister of writer-director Lois Weber, as a researcher. Her work, however, was tied to her sister's
“Griffith's Cameraman, Billy Bitzer: An Interview by Beaumont Newhall,” in Iris Barry,
Museum of Modern Art, New York. In his capacity as a librarian at the Museum of Modern Art, Newhall spoke to
embarked on the research for her film.
“New World Film Department: Mrs. Eugenie Ingleton Is Librarian of the Reference Department at Fort Lee
There is not much biographical information on George Ingleton available before he worked in film production, so the origin of his library remains unknown. He was mentioned in many press reports in Britain and the United States as a touring stage actor, producer, and stage manager from 1902 through 1910. For a few of these, see “Sheffield Notes and Jottings,” Yorkshire Telegraph and Star, March 22, 1902; “This Week’s Amusements in Leeds,” Yorkshire Evening Post, June 16, 1903; and, “Mrs. Tree Was Departing, Will Return to Play Here,” New York Evening World, February 22, 1908. A small amount of information on his background appeared later when he sold his library to Fox and then died in a gruesome car accident, see “George Ingleton Research Library Acquired By Fox for Coast Plant,” Moving Picture World, February 6, 1926; “George Ingleton Dead.” Film Daily 36, no. 49 (May 27, 1926): 2; and “George Ingleton,” Variety, May 26, 1926; “Founder of Great Fox Technical Library Killed,” Fox Folks, July 1926.
Kevin Brownlow, The Parade’s Gone By... (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), 47.
The notion that the sense of authenticity was partly built from a familiarity with the source image has been examined by Vanessa Schwartz in her examination of the faits divers wax tableaux of the Musée Grévin in 1880s Paris. In that case, the wax displays looked like images that had appeared in recent newspaper stories. The similarity of appearance made the museum audience believe the authenticity of the wax depictions. See Vanessa R. Schwartz, Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 118-130.
Brownlow 51.
“Billy Bitzer on Photography, Conversations with Beaumont Newhall,” D.W. Griffith Papers, 1897-1954, Museum of Modern Art, New York. In his capacity as a librarian at the Museum of Modern Art, Newhall spoke to Bitzer in 1936. He later wrote up notes of his interview, describing Bitzer’s actions in the third person. He did this to assist Iris Barry, the director of the MoMA Film Library, who was working on an exhibition and catalog called D.W. Griffith: American Film Master, which ran from November 13, 1940 through January 5, 1941. In the catalog, this quotation was changed to say Bitzer bribed the librarian for photographs on Birth rather than Intolerance, in order to fit better into the context of the show. Why a librarian would need to be bribed to perform a basic part of their job was never explained. In 1940, Newhall became MoMA’s first curator of photography. See, Beaumont Newhall, “Griffith’s Cameraman, Billy Bitzer: An Interview by Beaumont Newhall,” in Iris Barry, D. W. Griffith: American Film Master [1940], Second edition, (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1965), 36-38.
Shortly after moving the production side of Universal to Los Angeles in 1913, the studio briefly employed Ethel Weber Howland, a sister of writer-director Lois Weber, as a researcher. Her work, however, was tied to her sister’s productions rather than to the greater needs of the studio (“All Aboard for Universal City,” The Universal Weekly, January 17, 1914, 5). Many thanks to Shelley Stamp for confirming this detail.
“More Laboratories,” Motion Picture News.
For more on H.O. Davis and his views of gender in the workplace, see Mark Garrett Cooper, Universal Women: Filmmaking and Institutional Change in Early Hollywood (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2010) 25-43; for

34 The Ingletons left Universal a few months after H.O. Davis left the firm. It is possible but unclear that the general manager’s departure had anything to do with their exit. For more on Davis’ departure from Universal, see Cooper 32-44. LeRoy Armstrong, the researcher who replaced Ingleton at Universal later wrote about how Ingleton left the studio with his library. LeRoy Armstrong, “Building a Library,” *Universal City News*, August 1922.

35 Parks, “The Ingletons At Home.” After leaving Universal, the Ingletons worked at different studios throughout Hollywood. In that period, Magnus wrote scenarios for several production companies including National Film Corp. of America, Thomas H. Ince Corp., and Famous Players-Lasky (Parks, 5, 12; “Very Forceful and Real Tragedy but Sympathetic Element is Lacking,” *Wis’s Daily*, September 19, 1920; “George Ingleton Research Library Acquired By Fox for Coast Plant,” *Moving Picture World*, February 6, 1926).

36 Memo from Cecil B. DeMille to Bessie McGaffey, March 19, 1925, MSS 1400, Box 266, Folder 21, Cecil B. DeMille Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. While the number of books is not mentioned in the memo, an article by George Ingleton in *Special Libraries Journal*, published a month after his death in 1926, does mention the 500,000 “clippings” in the collection, (George Ingleton, “The Fox Studio Library,” *Special Libraries Journal*, June 1926, 245).

37 Bessie McGaffey to Cecil B. DeMille [March 1925], MSS 1400, Box 266, Folder 21, Cecil B. DeMille Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.


40 “More Laboratories,” *Motion Picture News*.


42 While data on the growth of the San Fernando Valley are difficult to separate from the rest of Los Angeles county, the growth in the region was tremendous in this period. Census statistics from 1910 to 1920 show a 50-percent growth in the county during this period, one of the highest rates in the state. The data also show the county had the highest population density in the state by 1920, showing how many city residents saw the San Fernando Valley as a less-dense option for living. See “Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920—Bulletin, Population California,” United States Department of Commerce, accessed September 2, 2018, ftp://ftp.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1920/bulletins/demographics/population-ca-number-of-inhabitants.pdf.

43 Alumni Association of the Library School, Los Angeles Public Library, “Library School and Training Classes, Los Angeles Public Library—Directory of Graduates,” 1934, Los Angeles Public Library Special Collections. While there is no accounting for alumni who might have been missed in this listing, every single graduate in this roll was a woman. For more on early library schools and the options they opened for women’s labor and social standing, see Joanne E. Passet, *Cultural Crusaders: Women Librarians in the American West, 1900-1917* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994).

44 “Lecture Outlines and Class Stencils of the Library School of the Los Angeles Public Library, 1928-1929,” Los Angeles Public Library Special Collections. While this listing of class descriptions, lectures, and examinations dates from a decade after Percey and Richardson were students and therefore is not necessarily the exact curriculum they had, it shows a general type of education and points to standard practices in libraries in the era.

45 “In and Out of West Coast Studios—F.P.-Lasky Studio,” *Motion Picture News*, June 8, 1918.

46 In her book, *The Library Book*, author Susan Orlean claimed studio researchers would go to the Hollywood branch in pairs so one could throw books out the window to their accomplice below, thus avoiding checking out books and returning them. While this seems possible, it is also strange considering how much effort studio libraries put into re-photographing books they borrowed. Regardless of the accuracy of the claim, this shows the relationship between the Hollywood branch of the LAPL and the studios was always intimate. See Susan Orlean, *The Library Book* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018): 109-110. Many thanks to Brian Jacobson and Dan Josefson for finding this passage.

47 “Librarians Study Lasky Filing System,” *Moving Picture World*, March 22, 1919. Even when explaining what would turn out to be a major innovation in Hollywood production methods, the trade press referred to Bessie McGaffey as Mrs. Kenneth McGaffey. While this makes sense in the context of the gender roles of the era, and that as a publicist for the studio, Kenneth probably had a daily correspondence with the newspaper, it is noteworthy considering how his work was much more pedestrian than hers. She would ultimately be recognized for her diligent and careful work with DeMille, however in this early era, she was still simply her husband’s wife.
While it was never stated explicitly, it seems the Hollywood Branch also had a picture collection of some size. It is not clear if other branches also had picture collections. It is possible portions of the LAPL picture collection was ultimately from the Central Library to the Hollywood branch, as that is the only specific place such pictures were mentioned in the press by the mid-1920s.

“Los Angeles Film Brevities,” *Moving Picture World*, February 10, 1917, and J.C. Jessen, “In and Out of West Coast Studios,” *Motion Picture News*, February 10, 1917. It seems Sullivan was hired at a moment when McGaffey was taking on the additional role of scenarist, under William C. DeMille and Marion Fairfax. Sullivan was able to cover the research work McGaffey could no longer handle while she worked on other scenario writing projects. For more, see “Elizabeth McGaffey to Write Lasky Scenario,” *Motion Picture World*, February 17, 1917; and Jessen.


It is essential to keep in mind that research librarians and the press frequently referred to materials as “books,” which simply differentiated their form from portfolios, images, and other forms of visual media. Nearly every book in any cinematic research library was illustrated or entirely image-based. Looking at hundreds of inventory lists, ordering requests, and descriptions of libraries, it becomes clear that writing “books” was merely a simple way of expressing “books of pictures.”


“Library Schools—Los Angeles Public Library,” *Public Libraries* 26, no. 2 (February 1921): 155-156. See also, “Research Heads Off Historical Anachronisms for Hollywood,” *Sales Management*, 1946, 120. In this era, the Los Angeles Public Library’s branch in Hollywood was located on the northwest corner of Hollywood Blvd. and Ivar Avenue, only half a block from its current location, two blocks from Paramount, ten blocks from Fox, and just over two miles from Griffith’s studio.


“Library School of the Los Angeles Public Library, Circular of Information, 1919,” 21. While there is no written accounts of her work in Fresno, it likely involved the management and use of picture collections, considering how important such resources were to children’s collections of the era. See, John Cotton Dana, “The Age of Pictures,” *The Call*, August 10, 1902, Newark Public Library scrapbook.

“Library School of the Los Angeles Public Library, Circular of Information, 1923,” 4, 23.