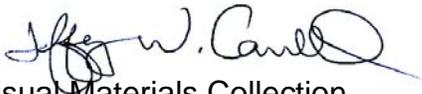




TO: Cultural Education Committee
FROM: Jeffrey Cannell 
SUBJECT: State Archives Visual Materials Collection
DATE: January 6, 2014

AUTHORIZATION(S):


SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

The State Archives holds rich resources documenting the history of education in New York State. This includes over 32,000 lantern slides and glass plate negatives that were distributed by the State Education Department to schools and other institutions for use as instructional aids between 1896 and the late 1930's. These materials were an early form of instructional technology and were widely used to provide "visual education" in support of text-based approaches.

The Archives now makes these materials available through online digital images, via microfilm, and on-site for a wide array of users. In addition, images are available for purchase.

Reason(s) for Consideration

For Information

Background Information

As early as 1886, the New York State Legislature sponsored programs using visual aids for educational purposes in collaboration with the American Museum of Natural History to provide free illustrated lectures on scientific subjects such as anatomy, physiology, zoology, and physical geography. At first, these lectures were only given in New York City and were attended by teachers and the general public. Soon after, lecture materials were provided to normal schools and eventually any school district throughout the state. The Board of Regents began its own visual education program in 1896. Sets of lantern slides and photographic prints were circulated for instruction, and large wall pictures to be used for schoolroom decoration. These items were loaned to libraries, extension centers, evening and summer schools, and other educational extension organizations.

This program eventually became the responsibility of the State Education Department's Division of Visual Instruction (DVI).

Lantern slides were compiled, mostly between 1911 and 1939, as instructional aids for the public school curriculum. More than 20,000 unique images dating from 1856-1939 document a wide variety of subjects including New York State, North American and world geography, history, natural sciences, fine arts, trades, industries, education, and schools. The collection includes views of scenery, sites, structures, and human activities in the United States and other countries; copies of historical images of individuals and works of art; world climates; animal life; ancient and American history; English and American literature; iron and steel industry; agriculture; forestry; lumbering; fishing; coal mining; salt; clay products; fiber and textiles; and the New York State canal system

The photographs were reproduced in the form of lantern slides for use in classrooms. A lantern slide is a positive photographic transparency sandwiched between two 3 1/4" by 4" glass plates, and projected onto a screen by means of a "Magic Lantern" projector. The photographs document one of the earliest uses of audio-visual techniques for classroom instruction and include numerous rare or unique images. Thousands of slides were produced by the Division of Visual Instruction and sets of slides were loaned to schools throughout the State from 1896 to 1939. With the decline in funding for the DVI's program in the 1930s and the advent of other visual education approaches, the lantern slide loan program was discontinued in 1939. The loan slide collection was divided among normal schools, museums, and school districts. Subsequently the Bureau (later renamed the Bureau of Audio and Visual Aids) concentrated exclusively on research and advisory services to schools regarding the educational use of audio-visual media.

The DVI collection serves as both evidence of then path-breaking approaches in educational technology and innovation as well as providing an important resource of visual images. The State Archives has undertaken the complicated preservation of these important resources and has made them accessible to the research and education community resulting in wide use of this unique collection.