

Sarah M. Haight. American Art Lending, 1895-1975. A Master's Paper for the M.S. in L.S degree. November, 2006. 60 pages. Advisor: David Carr.

Abstract: This paper documents the range of art lending in the United States to individuals by libraries, museums, and other cultural institutions from roughly 1895-1975. The historical analysis includes the reasons and motivations behind the creation of each kind of lending scheme and what its proponents hoped to accomplish, as well as how these collections fit into the broader goals of each type of institution. Loans of originals and reproductions are discussed.

Headings:

Picture Loan Collections

Picture Collection

AMERICAN ART LENDING, 1895-1975

by
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Table of Contents

I. Introduction	2
II. The Early History of Picture Lending.	13
III. Analysis of Lending Schemes	22
IV. The Recent History of Lending Collections.	44
V. Conclusions and Future Directions.	48
Works Consulted.	52

I. Introduction.

In the Newark Public Library's 1913 Annual Report, there is a surprising statistic from the Art Department: 4,310 books were lent, but 56,555 pictures were circulated.¹ Picture lending made up the bulk of the department's circulation activity and was roughly equivalent to the annual total of children's books lent by the library.² To many users of libraries, the idea that they could go and check out pictures like they check out books is surprising and offers a new perspective on the possible range of library services. Not only could someone with an avid interest in art and visual representation borrow pictures from libraries, by the 1930s it was also possible to borrow original works of art from museums, galleries, and private libraries on a variety of terms. This paper documents the range of this practice from the period of roughly 1895-1975, and examines how circulating picture collections changed into forms of library practice familiar to librarians and patrons today. I examine the reasons and motivations behind the creation of each kind of lending scheme and what its proponents hoped to accomplish, as well as how these collections fit into the broader goals of each type of institution.

I have chosen not to confine this study to one specific kind of institution because I want to focus on a particular phenomenon, that of borrowing works of art to hang on one's walls at home. As such, I am interested in all the ways a person in the United States during the period under study could acquire works of art, both original and

¹ J.C. Dana, "Library Report for 1913," *The Newarker* 4 (February 1914): 466.

² Ibid.

reproduction, which he or she could change regularly. Although I am writing the history of a domestic practice, I frame it in terms of the institutions that enabled the practice. As the majority of these institutions were libraries and museums, I have largely drawn on material from the history of libraries and museums in writing this paper. Such a study does not exist in the current literature of either field.

The status of research on the history of picture lending in American institutions lags behind the equivalent research on European institutions. The major scholar on the history of art lending is Horst Dietze, the head of the Internationales Archiv für Kunstverleih und Bildereien in Berlin. Most of his works exist only in German, but sporadic translations have appeared in *Art Libraries Journal*. His most comprehensive treatment of the history of art lending appears in a volume he edited, *Aspekte des Kunstverleihs* (Aspects of art lending). His essay, “Zur Geschichte des Kunstverleihs in Deutschland, Teil 1,” (Toward a history of art lending in Germany, part 1) is the most comprehensive history of the practice that exists.³ It covers the period 1906-1928, although in other articles Dietze has examined the earlier history of art lending.⁴ No second part of this work has been found in a review of the literature. The essay was helpful because it includes an extended reproduction of an article describing the Dayton Art Institute’s lending practices, which appeared in the journal *Kunst und Wirtschaft*, the official organ of the Reichswirtschaftsverband bildender Künstler Deutschlands (Union of German fine artists). This group organized the first modern picture lending scheme in Germany, and their journal is now very difficult for American researchers to use (one

³ Horst Dietze, “Zur Geschichte des Kunstverleihs in Deutschland, Teil 1,” in *Aspekte des Kunstverleihs*, ed. Horst Dietze (Berlin: Deutsches Bibliotheksinstitut, 1986), 129-197.

⁴ Horst Dietze, “Kunstverleih – Warum?” *Art Libraries Journal* 12 (1987): 19-23.

microform copy exists at the New York Public Library). The article provides a wealth of detail about the extent and operations of the Dayton, Ohio lending scheme and clearly conveys the enthusiasm it generated among German artists (“The portable picture is the radio of museums”).⁵

Dietze presents a brief timeline of European and American lending schemes in the text of a paper he read at the IFLA Section of Art Libraries in 1987.⁶ This article is perhaps the best overview of the topic in his writings. In this paper, he also reflects on the people who started the schemes and their motives, and summarizes reasons for retaining the practice in the present day.

In Dietze’s history of picture lending, Arthur Segal plays an important role. In an article devoted to the artist-turned-picture lending champion, he argues for a critical reappraisal of Segal’s contributions.⁷ Segal, a German artist, tried to institute picture lending as a means of supporting artists during the Weimar Republic and its attendant economic hardships. He later emigrated to England, where a scheme with some similarities to his ideas was instituted in the Borough of Holborn in 1954, ten years after his death. This is a potentially interesting connection between German and English lending schemes. However, Dietze makes no argument for the importance of Segal’s ideas in England beyond Holborn, and it appears there is little evidence to support claims of Segal’s influence beyond Germany.

⁵ “Das tragbare Bild ist das Radio der Museen.” Trans. author. Max Fleischer, “Verleihgalerie,” *Kunst und Wirtschaft* 8 (1927), 121-124, reproduced in Dietze, “Zur Geschichte des Kunstverleihs...” 147-150.

⁶ Horst Dietze, “Kunstverleih – Warum?” *Art Libraries Journal* 12 (1987): 19-23.

⁷ Horst Dietze, “Arthur Segal: picture lending and an artist’s life,” *Art Libraries Journal* 15 (1990): 10-14.

The biggest problem with Dietze's work for American scholars is the time period he often discusses. "Aspekte des Kunstverleihs in Deutschland" is the sole example of an extended treatment of the early twentieth century in his work. In all other works, he summarizes this period with a few sentences and moves on to the postwar period, when the most interesting activity occurred in Germany.⁸ This time has the most importance for practicing picture librarians, who are conceived as a main audience for these works.

There is also a thesis written by Annette Dannenberg in 1972, *Die Graphothek in der öffentlichen Bücherei* (The art lending collection in the public library), which examines the lending of original art in public libraries in Germany, Great Britain, Scandinavia, and the United States.⁹ She characterizes the lending of original art in public libraries in the United States as resting on a commercial basis, which is partially true.¹⁰ In an interesting argument, she links programs that lend art for a fee with the leasing of cars, televisions, and washing machines, and not with the lending programs the libraries conducted for books.¹¹ She thinks that if libraries in America had the means to build real art collections, most art rental services would not exist.¹² Apparently then the works would be loaned for free, having been bought by the library from the artist. She documents the existence of lending by libraries and museums, but does not treat the lending of reproductions as part of the broader continuum of art lending activity. The

⁸ See, for instance, his essays in Horst Dietze, ed., *Über Kunstleihe und Bildereien* (Berlin: Deutsches Bibliotheksinstitut, 1982).

⁹ Annette Dannenberg, *Die Graphothek in der öffentlichen Bücherei* (Berlin: Deutscher Büchereiverband, 1972).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, 38.

chapter dealing with the U.S. also contains a number of factual inaccuracies, perhaps because she had a difficult time obtaining additional sources documenting the practice. The chapter is based on only a few examples, and most of the schemes are treated dismissively. It demonstrates a lack of understanding of the place of art in libraries and American culture, and should only be consulted for information about the lending schemes of other countries.

Some interesting observations were made by Juliane Hagenström in the context of a larger article describing how to market one's picture lending service.¹³ The majority of her history draws heavily on Dietze's work, but she observes that while picture lending schemes in Germany were often organized to support artists, and consequently the works of art were not for sale (the artists instead getting a portion of rental fees), in the U.S., the Netherlands, and Sweden, schemes were geared more toward selling art in general, and the works were often sold to renters who grew attached to them.¹⁴ As this paper will make clear, this is only partially true. Hagenström also notes that the history of international picture lending has not yet been written, so the interesting but sweeping generalization may be forgiven.¹⁵

The German writers who discuss art lending in the United States tend to characterize it as a commercially-oriented endeavor. I will argue that it certainly had a commercial aspect, but that this was only part of a broader cultural mission to increase

¹³ Juliane Hagenström, " 'Bilder verleihen wie Bücher': Artotheken und der Einsatz von Kommunikationspolitik als Marketinginstrument," *Bibliothek* 23 (1999): 332-350.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 335.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*.

the understanding of art and the informed purchase of it, so that art ownership would not be a privilege available only to the elite.

Aside from these three scholars, no serious treatment of the history of picture lending exists. Many articles summarize the current state of picture lending in a particular region or country, with a sentence or two about its history in that area. As such, many of these articles fall into one of two categories: either they deal with the practical issues of managing a modern picture collection or they try to publicize the collections to a wider audience. They have been of limited usefulness to the present study.

American literature on the topic of picture lending, as mentioned previously, is scant. Most books and articles are a summary of current lending practices at a particular institution or group of institutions, sometimes with recommendations that can be generalized. Notable in this regard is a 1974 article published in *Library Journal*. The magazine requested information from libraries about their lending collections, and it summarizes common practices and problems in circulating art collections.¹⁶ Some works were specifically designed as guides to developing a circulating picture collection for libraries, but nonetheless provide a great deal of information about how the author's collection worked. Included in this group are works by Charles Cutter (*Notes from the Art Section of a Library*), John Cotton Dana (*The Picture Collection and Large Pictures, Educational and Decorative*, both from the series *Modern American Library Economy as Illustrated by the Newark N.J. Free Public Library*), Dorothy Stokes (*The Picture*

¹⁶ "Art loan collections," *Library Journal* 99 (May 1, 1974): 1258-1261.

Collection), Norma Ireland (*The Picture File in School, College, and Public Libraries*), and Donna Hill (*The Picture File*).¹⁷

Other works provide case studies of specific institutions. Notable in this category is *Picture Librarianship*, edited by Helen Harrison. The volume includes the history of the Westport, Connecticut Public Library, which built up an interesting collection in response to the needs of a new community of illustrators who moved to the area.¹⁸ Volumes from this late date (1981) do not often contain much relevant information, because they responded to the then-emergent field of picture librarianship. These were often non-circulating collections like those of slide and image research libraries.

Regarding the circulating collections of museums and other non-library institutions, the only source of this information is single articles, usually only a paragraph or two long, describing the lending practice of a specific institution. The majority of these articles were located using *Art Index Retrospective*. The limitations of this source are discussed below. No general history has been written of the lending practices of museums, and they did not develop guidelines for such collections, as libraries did.

After surveying the literature, I think the main reason it is more developed in Europe than in the United States is that the European practice of art lending experienced a revival there in the 1980s that continues, especially in France, Germany, and

¹⁷ For this work, the following editions were used: Charles Cutter, *Notes from the Art Section of a Library* (Boston: A.L.A., 1905); J.C. Dana and Blanche Gardner, *The Picture Collection, Revised* (Woodstock, VT: Elm Tree Press, 1917); Marjary L. Gilson and J.C. Dana, *Large Pictures, Educational and Decorative* (Woodstock, VT: Elm Tree Press, 1912); Dorothy H. Stokes, *The Picture Collection: Sources, Methods, and Use* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1929); Norma Olin Ireland, *The Picture File in School, College, and Public Libraries* (Boston: F.W. Faxon, 1935); Donna Hill, *The Picture File: A Manual and a Curriculum-Related Subject Heading List, Second Edition* (Hamden, CT: Linnet, 1978). Editions were chosen based on earliest date, most comprehensive edition, or local availability.

¹⁸ Thelma S. Gordon, "A public library in Westport, Connecticut," in *Picture Librarianship*, ed. Helen P. Harrison (London: The Library Association, 1981): 423-427.

Scandinavia, to the current date.¹⁹ This increase in contemporary practice has been accompanied by an increasing interest in its origins, and has helped to develop the literature on this topic.

The method employed in this study is historical analysis. As previously mentioned, I focus primarily on the history of institutions, and in the course of doing so, I am concerned with the history of ideas about art and its place in peoples' homes. Data to write the social history of this practice are not as readily available as the kinds of sources I have already discussed, and in chapter five I present additional ideas about how this paper could be expanded to include the social history of art lending.

In gathering data for this paper, the main resources used were the *Library Literature and Information Science* and *Art Index Retrospective* databases. These were the only databases found to have adequate thesaurus terms for conducting a literature search (the term "Picture Loan Collections" was used in *Library Literature*, and "Pictures/Circulation, Loans, Etc.," "Museums and Art Galleries/Loans," and "Sculpture/Circulation, Loans, Etc." were used in *Art Index Retrospective*). *Art Full Text* (the successor resource to *Art Index Retrospective*) was also searched, but no newer articles on the topic had been indexed. Attempts were made to search *Library and Information Science Abstracts* and the *Bibliography of the History of Art*, but the results either duplicated those found in the other databases or were too broad to be useful. No

¹⁹ For a summary of the practice in France, see Élisabeth Couturier, "Louez une oeuvre d'art!" *Connaissance des Arts* 610 (November 2003): 139-146. Additionally, a special issue of *Art Libraries Journal* contains essays from practitioners in Scandinavian countries: *Art Libraries Journal* 11/3 (1986). It contains the following articles: Ilmi Jarvelin, "An art lending service in Finland"; Anders Ericson, "The Norwegian artoteksentralen: co-operation between artists and library authorities"; Sven-Olof Svensson, "Artotheque activities in Swedish public libraries."

thesaurus term to describe the practice of art lending existed in either database. OCLC WorldCat was also used; the LC subject heading “Libraries and Pictures” proved most useful. The largest problem in conducting this literature search was the multiple meanings of the term “art loan,” which can mean both the lending of a work to an individual and the lending of works from one museum to another. The LC subject heading “Art rental and Lending Services” generally describes loans between museums, but both headings had to be searched thoroughly, because the application of subject headings varied among the work of different catalogers.

The limits of these resources should be noted. The main limitation I encountered was the start date of each resource: *Library Literature*’s coverage begins in 1984, and the *Art Index Retrospective* only goes back to 1929. *Art Index Retrospective* claims that its coverage goes back to 1924, but I found no articles on this topic from the date range 1924-1929 in the database.

I sampled early library practice in books published on the topic and a few early articles. More journal articles may exist without useful indexing. The lack of earlier index material was detrimental with regard to museum practice. The German artists of the Reichswirtschaftsverband bildender Künstler Deutschlands based their hopes for the success of their art lending schemes on Max Fleischer’s reports of flourishing programs in the United States.²⁰ Dietze points out that which flourishing schemes Fleischer encountered, other than the one at Dayton, are unknown.²¹ On the basis of the existing material I have found regarding museum loan schemes, I would be willing to think that

²⁰ Dietze, “Arthur Segal,” 12.

²¹ Dietze, “Zur Geschichte des Kunstverleihs in Deutschland,” 146.

other successful programs may have been in place in 1927, but without going through hundreds of pages of art weeklies and monthlies a page at a time, I would not be able to substantiate the claim.

In order to organize the data, I created a spreadsheet of lending schemes. I recorded the following information: name of institution, year of reference, location of institution, institution type, eligible borrowers, loan terms, whether or not the works were for sale, the purpose of the collection, the source of the reference, and any interesting notes that did not fall into other categories. Each entry was then coded for the type or types of pictures loaned, and for the institution type to make analysis of the entries easier. The following types of images were included in the analysis: reproductions, reference images, non-art objects, work of local artists, contemporary non-local art, and original non-contemporary works. The institutions were broken down into the following types: public library, museum, subscription library, college or university library or gallery, commercial gallery, and self-incorporated artist. The spreadsheet included 108 entries at the time of writing.

In the chapters that follow, I begin by summarizing the early history of picture lending in general, and discuss what is known about the early history of the practice in the United States. From there, I proceed to delineate five types of art lending institutions and examine their practices. I then briefly examine the successors to many of the circulating picture collections and the reasons for their demise. Finally, I conclude with some unanswered questions and examine how the study could be expanded to provide a more complete history of the practice of art lending.

The significance of this study is to elucidate the origins of a practice that is currently not well documented. By doing so, I hope that its historical significance will be better understood. I also hope that this study will serve as a starting point for further research on this topic, and help to situate current continuations and revivals of this practice within their historical context.

II. The early history of picture lending.

In this chapter I describe what is known about the early history of picture lending, beginning with Europe, where the practice is better-documented, and then moving on to the United States. By early history, I mean either the first documented instance of the practice in a given location, or activity occurring before 1930.

The earliest known incidence of picture lending is dated by Dietze as beginning in either 1802 or 1809. In his article on Arthur Segal, he dates a Dresden scheme as originating in 1802, but provides no further detail on the subject.²² In another article, he describes a subscription library of pictures functioning in Germany in 1809.²³ It is possible that this is the same institution as that described in the other article as having begun in 1802, but it is not certain. He also mentions a group of artists who experimented with the idea of a circulating picture collection in 1895, but gives no further information about this group, either.²⁴

Dietze also indicates that a lending scheme was in place in Switzerland in 1914, and it is possibly this scheme that Segal referred to when he said that art lending was organized in Switzerland during the First World War, while he lived there.²⁵ It is uncertain what documentary evidence supports Dietze's claim of an active scheme in

²² Horst Dietze, "Arthur Segal: picture lending and an artist's life," *Art Libraries Journal* 15 (1990): 10-14.

²³ Horst Dietze, "Kunstverleih – Warum?" *Art Libraries Journal* 12 (1987): 19-23.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., and Dietze, "Arthur Segal," 14.

1914, especially because in another article he says he was unsuccessful in finding a reference to an active art lending scheme in Switzerland before 1943.²⁶

Arthur Segal's attempts to institute the practice of picture lending in Germany began in 1906, when he tried to persuade art galleries to partake of the practice and convinced A.R. Mayer and Anselm Rüst to write about his ideas in the newspapers.²⁷ He was not successful in instituting the practice, although several other members of the art scene in Germany at the time were thinking along the same lines.²⁸ After living in Switzerland during World War I, Segal returned to find the condition of artists even worse than when he left, largely due to the effects of inflation. Now artists were almost completely unable to support themselves by the sale of their work, leading many to consider ideas they had not previously thought viable.

In Segal's scheme, put into practice in 1925, artists would allow their works to be loaned, and would receive a portion of the fee for each loan. The fees were based on the value of the work, and loan periods varied from 3 months to a year.²⁹ This plan failed to win broad support outside Berlin and met with resistance from artists in other cities, who felt it was just another way to exploit them. It was dissolved in 1927.³⁰ A more viable scheme was proposed by Heinrich Schulz in 1926, and eventually it replaced Segal's earlier idea among the Reichswirtschaftsverband bildender Künstler Deutschlands (RbKD; Union of German Fine Artists). Schulz proposed the idea of art-purchasing

²⁶ Dietze, "Arthur Segal," 14.

²⁷ Ibid., 11.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 12.

³⁰ Ibid.

subscriptions, recognizing that many people still wanted to own art, even if they bought it in an unconventional way.³¹

Dietze mentions that practical art lending schemes were also introduced during the 1920s in Frankfurt am Main and Ulm, although further details of the schemes are not provided.³² It is likely that they functioned according to Schulz's art-purchasing subscription model. The success of these schemes was short-lived, though. The RbKD survived for only three months after Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933.³³

Dietze also points out a successful scheme that has survived to the present day in Hamburg. The Griffelkunst (slate pencil art) group worked like a subscription library for original art and operated independently of the RbKD.³⁴

³¹ Ibid., 13.

³² Horst Dietze, "A report on the current state of German picture lending collections (Pictuaries)," *Art Libraries Journal* 10 (1985): 13.

³³ Ibid., 14.

³⁴ Ibid., 13-14.



Figure 1: An example of art that wears out, according to Lawrence. Edwin Landseer, *Dignity and Impudence*, 1839. Can you tell which is which?

home.³⁵ A similarity shared by Lawrence and Segal is their emphatic desire that art not be considered primarily as property. Both thought that art was only useful insofar as it continually caused people to look at it anew, revealing new aspects and retaining the viewer's interest. Lawrence wanted circulating art schemes because he thought there was a lot of good, but not great, art, which could be refreshing and interesting in the home for a few months or years. After that, it became worn-out and should be changed for something different. He illustrates this with the example of, "those two Landseer dogs, 'Dignity and Impudence' ...they pleased immensely in their day. And the interest was

It is certain that circulating picture schemes existed in England by the late 1920s, although there is no source documenting their early history. References exist to galleries in a few locations lending pictures, and it is likely that the history of picture lending is similar in England and in the United States. D.H.

Lawrence wrote an elegant plea for circulating picture collections, specifically mentioning a

scheme at Harrods whereby one could obtain works of contemporary art for display at

³⁵ D.H. Lawrence, "Pictures on the Walls," in *Assorted Articles* (New York: Knopf, 1930): 207-225.

sustained, perhaps, for twenty years. But after twenty years it has become a humiliation to keep them hanging on the walls of Chatsworth or wherever they hang” (fig. 1).³⁶

It seems likely that, as with many of the other innovations in American libraries at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the idea for circulating picture collections began in several places around the same time. A precursor to circulating pictures was non-circulating collections of reference images, such as that of the Free Public Library of Worcester, Massachusetts. Its librarian, Samuel Green, began collecting books and portfolios of images for residents to consult soon after he began working there in 1867.³⁷ He also organized exhibitions in the library to which teachers were invited to bring their students.³⁸ At a time when few school textbooks were illustrated, being able to view images related to their studies was very beneficial to students.

The idea of circulating works of art appears to have occurred to Charles Cutter and John Cotton Dana at about the same time. Cutter hit upon the idea of bringing photographs of works of art and architecture back with him when he was traveling in Europe and collecting materials for the Forbes Library of Northampton, Massachusetts in 1893.³⁹ Cutter says that while he worked at the Boston Athenaeum, he “found that almost every one likes a little good art,” and this inspired him to collect photographs,

³⁶ Ibid., 211-212.

³⁷ Samuel Swett Green, *The Use of Pictures in Libraries* (Boston: Wright and Potter, 1898), 4.

³⁸ Ibid., 5-7.

³⁹ Charles Ammi Cutter, *Notes from the Art Section of a Library* (Boston: American Library Association, 1905), 4.

engravings, casts, watercolors, and chromolithographs for the Forbes Library.⁴⁰ Cutter specifically mentions that teachers used the collection as a curriculum aid and for decoration. Before the Easter holiday of 1903, about 100 photographs of Raphael's work were returned, as well as 97 pictures of Rome's art and architecture.⁴¹

At roughly the same time (1891), a scheme was implemented at the Denver Public Library under the direction of John Cotton Dana.⁴² The library at that time was housed in a wing of the high school, and the scheme was originally conceived as a curriculum aid. Dana perceived his work to include making it easier for teachers to do their jobs, and by providing curriculum-appropriate images, he was able to accomplish this.⁴³ In fact, many collections of images began as collections for use by teachers in their classrooms, and eventually expanded their circulation policies to include the loan of pictures to the public.

In 1902, Dana began a similar collection in his new post at the Newark Public Library. It is unclear whether Dana and Cutter were aware of each other's work in the early 1890s, but they corresponded about cooperating on art exhibitions while Dana worked in Springfield, Massachusetts, from 1899-1901.⁴⁴ It is possible that they discussed art lending in this correspondence. Dana apparently thought highly of Cutter's work with art lending collections, and when Gilson and Dana wrote their work on large decorative and educational pictures in 1912, they referred readers to Cutter's *Notes from*

⁴⁰ Ibid.; Francis L. Miksa, *Charles Ammi Cutter: Nineteenth-century Systematizer of Libraries* (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1974), 793.

⁴¹ Cutter, *Notes from the Art Section*, 4.

⁴² Dana discusses some of his early purchase for the Denver Public Library in Marjary L. Gilson and J.C. Dana, *Large Pictures, Educational and Decorative* (Woodstock, VT: Elm Tree Press, 1912), 12.

⁴³ J.C. Dana, "Relations of a library to its city," in J.C. Dana, *Libraries: Addresses and Essays* (White Plains, NY: H.W. Wilson, 1916), 197-199.

⁴⁴ Miksa, 797.

the Art Section of a Library for further suggestions on building and maintaining such a collection.⁴⁵ Whether or not they were aware of each other's work when they began their lending programs, developing such a collection fell within the broader scope of attempts by both librarians to increase public access to library materials through innovations like open shelving and fewer restrictions on who could borrow.

It appears that picture collections became popular among American libraries in the 1910s and 1920s. In the introduction to the second edition of *The Picture Collection*, Dana writes:

We have had many requests from libraries and other institutions for a complete list of these [subject] headings. Information has perhaps been more often asked for by librarians and others on our picture collection than on any other subject which has been covered in the pamphlets thus far issued⁴⁶

Newark's picture collection continued to grow, and by 1931 included three distinct collections: original fine prints, reproductions of works of art, and the picture collection, a group of images classified and filed by subject.⁴⁷ Library organizations also began to send out pictures with their traveling library shipments of books to rural areas in Massachusetts and Wisconsin in the late 1890s.⁴⁸

Some of the results of a survey by Dana of libraries and their art-related efforts were published in a 1910 pamphlet by Mabel Chase, the Assistant Supervisor of Drawing in the Public Schools of Newark.⁴⁹ Thirty-seven of the fifty queried libraries responded,

⁴⁵ Ibid., 78.

⁴⁶ J.C. Dana and Blanche Gardner, *The Picture Collection, Revised* (Woodstock, VT: Elm Tree Press, 1917), 3.

⁴⁷ "Circulating Prints in Newark," *American Magazine of Art* 23 (July 1931): 74-5.

⁴⁸ Green, 11-12.

and from their responses we know that by 1910 circulating picture schemes were operational in Springfield, Massachusetts; Cincinnati; Dubuque, Iowa; Port Huron, Michigan, and Buffalo.⁵⁰ The survey also indicated that the Forbes Library of Northampton had an annual circulation of over 20,000 images in 1909.⁵¹

There was also planning for picture collections at the state library association level in California. In 1908, the California Library Association published an annotated list of 500 reproductions of architecture, sculpture, and painting recommended for public libraries developing collections. James L. Gillis, State Librarian of California, urged that, “thought be given in every library to the foundation of a picture collection.”⁵² It can be inferred from the author’s comments that the County of Los Angeles Public Library was circulating pictures at the time.

I am fairly confident in dating the origin of circulating collections of pictures at libraries to the 1890s, with the movement led by Cutter, Dana, and others like them. It is possible that earlier instances of these collections existed, but the librarians of the 1890s formed the beginning of a larger movement of libraries to circulate pictures as they did books.

In dating the beginning of museum schemes, there appears to be little evidence to contradict the claim of the Circulating Picture Club of the Art Alliance of Philadelphia to be the “nation’s first permanent circulating library of pictures by living American

⁴⁹ Mabel J. Chase, *Public Libraries and Art Education* (Newark: Baker, 1910).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵² Anna McC. Beckley, *C.L.A. Picture List* (Los Angeles: California Library Association, 1908), 2.

artists.”⁵³ It began its services in 1925. Although a variety of motives likely led to its formation, the art press specifically cited a desire to assist artists during the Depression and to help others besides the wealthy enjoy art at home.⁵⁴

As I mentioned in chapter one, I was not able to find an index to the American art press that goes earlier than 1929, but the articles from after this date seem to pick up on an ongoing conversation about circulating picture schemes in American art museums and galleries. In fact, the earliest journal article I have found is the 1927 article by Max Fleischer in *Kunst und Wirtschaft* describing the Dayton (Ohio) Art Institute.⁵⁵ Fleischer describes an active scheme, and the reader is led to believe that the scheme has been in existence for at least a few years. Museum lending programs were also, in all likelihood, influenced by library lending programs in their local areas. Although few libraries lent original works of art at that time, picture lending itself was being practiced by a number of libraries.

I have not been able to comment about the history of other kinds of picture loan schemes because there were not enough examples to be able to generalize. In the next chapter, I move beyond this historical outline to a detailed examination of various kinds of lending schemes that places them within the larger context of their supporting institutions.

⁵³ “Club buys eleven paintings for its circulating collection,” *Art News* 30 (May 14, 1932): 8.

⁵⁴ Ibid.; “Philadelphia picture club purchases six paintings,” *Art News* 32 (February 3, 1934): 19; Edith Emerson, “A successful circulating picture club,” *American Magazine of Art* 23 (November 1931): 425.

⁵⁵ Max Fleischer, “Verleihgalerie,” *Kunst und Wirtschaft* 8 (1927), reproduced in Horst Dietze, “Zur Geschichte des Kunstverleihs in Deutschland, Teil 1,” in *Aspekte des Kunstverleihs*, ed. Horst Dietze (Berlin: Deutsches Bibliotheksinstitut, 1986), 147-150.

III. Analysis of lending schemes.

In this chapter, I discuss the results of my classification of lending schemes. The chapter is organized by institution type, and under each institution type the kinds of pictures loaned are discussed. I chose to organize the chapter this way to permit generalizations about the kinds of lending schemes most often found at various institutions. I begin by discussing public libraries, then move on to museums, university or college museums or libraries, subscription libraries, commercial galleries, and conclude with a self-incorporated artist. Within each institution type, I discuss the kinds of objects that were circulated, to whom, and for what purpose. The kinds of objects circulated include reproductions, reference images, works by local artists, contemporary non-local art, original non-contemporary works, and decorative arts items. What is included in each category is delineated the first time it occurs.

I would like to make a note about the categories of “works by local artists” and “contemporary, non-local works” before continuing. All U.S. cities except for New York City were considered capable of having local artists. New York City, due to its status as an art capital, was not considered to have them. Artists came from all over the country and world to work in New York City, giving it an eclectic art scene. Rather than try to distinguish between who is a local in New York City and who is not, all contemporary art included in lending schemes there was considered to be contemporary non-local art.

The kinds of art circulated by public libraries encompassed almost every kind of lending scheme. The most popular items to circulate were overwhelmingly reproductions, and most libraries began their collections with a strong interest in circulating copies of the old masters. By reproductions, I mean images, produced either by photography or by a printing process, circulated primarily for decoration, which reproduce works by well-known artists. The second most common kind of collection was of reference images, and I will discuss the close relationship between these two kinds of collections below. By reference images, I mean a collection of images that was developed and circulated for reference purposes, often having been clipped out of books and magazines and filed by subject. A few public libraries also circulated the original work of local artists, often developing their collection after experiencing success in circulating reproductions. One library was found to have circulated non-local contemporary art, and one circulated reproductions of museum jewelry.⁵⁶

The greatest diversity of collections in a single library belonged to Newark, which, in addition to its collection of reproductions and reference images, loaned original fine prints from Europe and Japan.⁵⁷ The collection of Japanese prints was largely built by Dana, who planned but never completed a book on the subject.⁵⁸

Most reproductions collected were of paintings, but the 1974 *Library Journal* article discusses a number of libraries' experience with sculpture reproductions. Few were happy with the circulation figures for their sculpture reproduction collections. The

⁵⁶ "Art loan collections," *Library Journal* (May 1, 1974): 1259-1260.

⁵⁷ "Circulating Prints in Newark," *American Magazine of Art* 23 (July 1931): 74-5.

⁵⁸ William Dane, "John Cotton Dana: a contemporary appraisal of his contributions and lasting influence on the library and museum worlds 60 years after his death," *Art Libraries Journal* 15 (1990), 7.

librarian of the Norfolk, Virginia Public Library thought this was because the collection contained no metal sculptures, and that if she had obtained sculpture reproductions in metal, more patrons would have been interested.⁵⁹

Some libraries displayed and circulated art by local children, which proved to be popular, apparently with both adults and children.⁶⁰ In addition to this, by the 1970s, many libraries maintained a separate collection of images for children. One vendor sold a set of “mini-masters,” which a number of libraries in the 1974 *Library Journal* article said they had purchased.⁶¹ It is not certain what the set contained, but they were smaller in size than the standard reproductions sold by the same company and presumably contained images appropriate for children.

The picture collections of many libraries began by serving a curriculum need that was later broken down into separate reproduction and reference image collections. Many of the images Dana collected for classroom use in the Denver and Newark Public Schools were chosen both for their applicability to subjects studied in the schools and for their beauty and decorative qualities.⁶² Dana was one of the first librarians to advocate acquiring large color lithographs for classroom use. He noted that while large photographs of famous works of art were helpful to art students, they lacked color and were very expensive, thus making them impractical for large-scale classroom

⁵⁹ Ibid., 1259.

⁶⁰ Mabel J. Chase, *Public Libraries and Art Education* (Newark: Baker, 1910): 14.

⁶¹ “Art loan collections,” *Library Journal* (May 1, 1974): 1258-1261.

⁶² Marjary L. Gilson and J.C. Dana, *Large Pictures, Educational and Decorative* (Woodstock, VT: Elm Tree Press, 1912), 12-13.

decoration.⁶³ As there were few art lithography publishers in the United States at the time, Dana bought most of his large color lithographs from Europe.⁶⁴ What began as an idea to make examples of good art visible by decorating classrooms with it often spawned a reference picture scheme, as teachers returned to the library with additional requests for images to illustrate their lessons. In Newark, Dana made special provision for teachers in public schools by arranging for a delivery service to visit each school in the city weekly, picking up pictures that had been used the previous week, and taking requests from teachers for pictures on specific subjects.⁶⁵

The use of the collection by teachers was also given special status at the Public Library of the District of Columbia, where a separate index of teachers using the collection was kept.⁶⁶ Dorothy Stokes, the librarian in charge of this collection, created a list of suggested works of art for the elementary and high school curriculums of the District of Columbia public schools, which could presumably be obtained at the library.⁶⁷ Cutter also spoke of the classrooms in Northampton as being “covered with pictures and casts borrowed from the Forbes Library.”⁶⁸

Other collections of reference images were created not in response to school curricula, but to local professional need. In New York City, the Public Library’s central building was “overwhelmed” with requests for reference images by 1913, and created its

⁶³ Ibid., 10.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 12-22.

⁶⁵ J.C. Dana and Blanche Gardner, *The Picture Collection, Revised* (Woodstock, VT: Elm Tree Press, 1917), 62-71.

⁶⁶ Dorothy H. Stokes, *The Picture Collection: Sources, Methods, and Use* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office), 1929, 3.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 3-10.

⁶⁸ Charles Cutter, *Notes from the Art Section of a Library* (Boston: American Library Association, 1905): 4.

collection in response to this need in 1914.⁶⁹ As mentioned in chapter one, the Westport Public Library in Connecticut formed a collection of reference images in response to a community of illustrators who moved into the area. Many of the illustrators later donated their personal collections to the library, making it a truly unique collection.⁷⁰ I think there were far more collections of reference images in public libraries than I have been able to document, based on Dana's remark that he revised *The Picture Collection* in response to overwhelming interest by librarians in the subject.⁷¹

A different kind of public library collection is represented by the collaboration between the Portland Public Library Association and the Oregon Society of Artists, which began in 1929. In this scheme, card holders of the Portland Public Library were able to borrow original works by Oregon artists for free through the library.⁷² This collection, unlike many other library picture collections, was begun with the specific aim of fostering art appreciation in Portland by allowing the public to have original works of art in their homes.⁷³ The Cary Memorial Library in Lexington, Massachusetts had a similar goal for its circulating collection of original prints, which began in 1962. Robert Cain, the librarian in charge of the collection, observed that there was not an established marketing and distribution system for prints by anyone other than famous artists, and

⁶⁹ Lucia S. Chen, "From picture collection to picture collection online," *Collection Building* 23 (2004): 139.

⁷⁰ Thelma S. Gordon, "A public library in Westport, Connecticut," in *Picture Librarianship*, ed. Helen Harrison (London: Library Association, 1981): 423-427.

⁷¹ Dana and Gardner, *The Picture Collection, Revised*, 3.

⁷² "The Marsh Library plan of lending pictures," *American Magazine of Art* 24 (March 1932): 227-228.

⁷³ Ibid.

made it his goal to publicize printmakers' work through the library's lending program.⁷⁴

He hoped that through the experience of borrowing prints, patrons would begin to develop their own taste in art and begin purchasing their own prints. He noted that prints were often borrowed for homes and offices, and sometimes bought as presents.⁷⁵

Unlike museums, libraries rarely restricted use of their collections to a certain group, often remarking that the pictures were, "for home and school use," or something equally broad.⁷⁶ Common users, according to Stokes, included artists, designers, clubs, newspapers, businesses, and schools of all types, including Sunday schools.⁷⁷

Also unlike museums, but in common with standard library practice, most libraries lent both reference images and decorative pictures free of charge. Where charges do appear, they often either cover the cost of buying a cheap frame to display the work being borrowed, or assist in covering the costs of administering the program.⁷⁸ Charges appeared more frequently in collections where original works of art were available for loan, and often were scaled in accordance with the value of the work. The Acton Memorial Library in Massachusetts, for example, charged \$1.50 per month per \$100.00 valuation of original works, in part to cover insurance.⁷⁹ Generally, libraries also had fewer restrictions on who could borrow than museums; the most common restriction was that only adults could borrow.

⁷⁴ Robert E. Cain, "The original print," *Library Journal* 19 (1966): 5224.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 5223-5334.

⁷⁶ Dana and Gardner, *The Picture Collection, Revised*, 31.

⁷⁷ Stokes, *The Picture Collection*, 1.

⁷⁸ See "Circulating Prints in Newark," *American Magazine of Art* 23 (July 1931): 74-5; "Art loan collections," *Library Journal* (May 1, 1974): 1258-1261.

⁷⁹ "Art Loan Collections," 1260.

Whereas many museums gave specific reasons for starting their collection, libraries seldom did. The most commonly-occurring reasons for libraries to begin their collections, where any are given, are either in response to patron inquiries, particularly in the case of reference images, or to increase the general education of the public. Indeed, it should be noted that the most often-cited reason for librarians' formation of their collections is the *demand* for the images. Theoretical excursions into the reasons for collecting art are very rare among the writings of librarians on the topic. Gilson and Dana noted, "The library's collection was not made, however, at the call of any theory as to their value; but simply to supply a demand which made itself quite strongly felt."⁸⁰ Cutter specifically eschewed any idea of moral improvement by art as grounds for building a collection. He said that such an effect might occur, but that regard for it could scarcely be the basis for selecting pictures for a collection.⁸¹ Thus many of the libraries who began picture collections started them for the same reasons they collected books: to make accessible to the public items they could not otherwise afford to come into contact with, and for their general education and pleasure.

Additionally, librarians like Dana and Romana Javitz of the New York Public Library (NYPL) tried to create encyclopedic collections of pictorial representation that would be a pictorial version of the library. In doing so, they recognized that art is a form of information, like the written word, but one that is more immediate and accessible for some audiences, particularly those with low literacy levels. Many of those who administered reference image libraries also understood the important role images played

⁸⁰ Gilson and Dana, 10.

⁸¹ Cutter, 2-3.

in providing a stimulus for working artists and designers. Before beginning her tenure at the NYPL, Javitz traveled to Europe to get an idea of how picture collections were used there. She observed,

I was especially interested in how these foreign governments perpetuated in pictures changing customs and costumes of their own peoples. Everywhere I went I found that the record of folk arts [was] exceedingly rich and well preserved and that the governments had been interested in subsidizing this recording and documentation.⁸²

Javitz returned to New York and soon after began to interest others in her idea of creating the *Index of American Design*. She proposed the idea, which was designed to document all aspects of American design, to Holger Cahill, head of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) art programs.⁸³ WPA artists were assigned to the project, and the results, while not complete, were published.⁸⁴ The idea was an outgrowth of Javitz's experience working with designers and artists in the NYPL picture collection, who often would have benefited from such a work. Thus we see that the use of the picture collection, in this case, led to the creation of a work intended to function as its surrogate for artists who did not have access to such a collection.

In reading about these collections, a tension familiar to librarians emerges: that between providing popular images and improving the public's taste. Some collections,

⁸² Javitz to Holger Cahill, April 29, 1949, 1, in Romana Javitz Papers, NYPL Archives. Quoted in Anthony T. Troncale, "Worth beyond words: Romana Javitz and the New York Public Library's Picture Collection," *Biblion* 4 (Fall 1995), available at <http://www.nypl.org/research/chss/spe/art/photo/pchist/pchist2.html>. Accessed 10/29/06.

⁸³ It is worth noting that Cahill acquired his education in art curation and programming by working with Dana in Newark.

⁸⁴ Both microfiche and print volumes were reproduced from the originals by Somerset House in Teaneck, NJ in 1978-1979. A selection of items from the Index was published in 1950 by Macmillan, and is worth examining for the introduction by Holger Cahill. The original resides in the National Gallery of Art.

specifically that of the Fairfield, Connecticut Public Library, stated that they only collected what the public wanted to check out. Because modern trends in art were not well-liked by the population, these librarians found no point in collecting reproductions or originals of it.⁸⁵ It was more common, though, to find that librarians advocated collecting images that stretched the local population's taste a bit. In his *Notes from the Art Section*, Cutter states that:

The first thing, then, is to ascertain whether your public has any definite art character, any knowledge of art, any traditions of art study and taste. If it has, you will of course try to satisfy its wants; and if they appear to you a little one sided, you will, so far as funds allow, try to broaden them and lead them into new art fields.⁸⁶

Many librarians echoed these sentiments. Where allocation of resources was in question, most librarians seem to have advocated a policy of buying the basics first; that is, the canon of Western art, perhaps with some modern Japanese, European, or American prints.⁸⁷ With additional resources, libraries sometimes branched out into contemporary art. The Teaneck, New Jersey Public Library mentioned that the initial demand for the contemporary prints it acquired was lower than that for their reproductions, but as more people were exposed to them, demand grew.⁸⁸ This, in fact, is part of the larger dynamic of which art lending collections were a part. Many librarians relate that before the establishment of their art programs, there was little interest in art in the community. Once the programs were established, though, art appreciation clubs and other activities

⁸⁵ Sue Radcliff, "The circulating framed art collection in public libraries: a new look," *Connecticut Libraries* 19 (1977), 22.

⁸⁶ Cutter, *Notes from the Art Section*, 3-4.

⁸⁷ Anna McC. Beckley, *C.L.A. Picture List* (Los Angeles: California Library Association, 1908), 2.

⁸⁸ "Art loan collections," *Library Journal* (May 1, 1974), 1258.

sprang up around them.⁸⁹ In places like Northampton and Newark, art lending occurred in conjunction with art exhibitions in library spaces, creating an atmosphere in which art was a major part of library activities.

Circulating picture collections in libraries, then, owe their origin to the expansion of ideas about what libraries could lend, or to the idea, as Hector Alliot stated, “that the *image* is brother to the *book*.”⁹⁰ The increasing demand for these images, in some libraries, led to the creation of picture files, in which pictures were clipped, mounted, and arranged by subject. As many authors of books on the subject observed, the images in otherwise obsolete works could illustrate ideas well enough to be clipped and retained. The ideas behind circulating picture collections eventually expanded to the inclusion of other media in libraries, which is described in more detail in chapter four.

As with libraries, there were a few types of museum lending collections. For the most part, museums did not lend works from their own collections; rather, they formed a separate lending collection, often working with area artists to get a representative local selection. With only a few exceptions, all museum lending schemes lent only contemporary art. Many lending schemes were formed by the women’s auxiliary of the museum, or by a group of artists affiliated with the museum. It is not possible to say who came up with the original idea for the lending scheme in any specific case, but these other groups are often mentioned in articles about the scheme, and were usually responsible for much of the work of administering the programs.

⁸⁹ Cutter, 4; “A pioneer idea,” *Art Digest* 3 (September 1929): 19; William K. Zinsser, “The graphic arts in a liberal education,” *Print* (New York, New York) 4 (1946): 19-22.

⁹⁰ Beckley, 2. Emphasis original.

Where non-contemporary works were loaned, the selection was mostly of nineteenth-century artists. The Albright Art Gallery in Buffalo, New York loaned original works by Delacroix, Toulouse-Lautrec, Whistler, and Corot, as well as works by Van Dyck and an original of Dürer's great woodcut *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*.⁹¹ The Albright Gallery also loaned a number of original works by important nineteenth and twentieth-century American artists, including Bellows, Chase, Hassam, Inness, Ryder, and Blakelock.⁹² The Newark Museum owned a few eighteenth- and nineteenth-century works by Greuze, Bierstadt, and Church, which were loaned to patrons with the rest of its circulating collections.⁹³ The museum had previously been part of the Newark Public Library, and Dana developed it into a separate institution in the late 1920s. The museum's lending plan could be seen as an extension of the work the library was doing at the same time.

A few museums, such as the Dayton Art Institute and the Newark Museum, loaned reproductions of old masters in addition to contemporary art. The Newark Museum under Dana's direction acquired copies in oil of some of the old masters, because he believed that these reproductions were faithful to the originals in a way that photographic reproductions could not be, at a time when all photographic reproductions were black and white.⁹⁴ The Dayton Art Institute sent information about the artist who painted the original work home with the loan, to help patrons get a better understanding

⁹¹ "Buffalo's Plan," *Art Digest* 8 (November 15, 1933): 18; "Albright Gallery to sponsor picture lending library," *Art News* 32 (November 18, 1933): 4.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Dorothy Dudley, "Copies of Old Masters, how the Newark Museum exhibits and lends them," *Museum News* 10 (October 15, 1932): 7-8

⁹⁴ Ibid.

of art history.⁹⁵ Max Fleischer also mentions that the museum organized writing contests for students in the public schools about American art, but stipulated that the student had to live with at least two pictures in his or her home during the year in order to enter the contest.⁹⁶ The lending program was apparently popular, and Fleischer mentions that there were cases in which students in the public schools contributed money to rent a work together to decorate their classroom.⁹⁷

The works loaned by museum schemes were generally small-scale, such as drawings, prints, and watercolors. The program associated with the Chicago Art Institute also loaned sculpture, but appears to be the only one that loaned this medium.⁹⁸

The sources of works included in museum lending schemes can be categorized into four groups. In one category are works bought by the institutions for the specific purpose of being loaned, and the Newark Museum is included in this small category. The second category is works that were either invited from specific artists or selected from a recent show, and includes the Philadelphia, Buffalo and Rochester, New York schemes. The most common way for these collections to be formed was for the works to be contributed by local artists, without a specific preliminary process of inviting or showing. The Akron, San Francisco, Portland, Dayton, Minneapolis, and Chicago schemes worked in this way. Perhaps the most unique scheme was that of the Museum of Modern Art in

⁹⁵ Max Fleischer, "Verleihgalerie," *Kunst und Wirtschaft* 8 (1927), 121-124, reproduced in Dietze, "Zur Geschichte des Kunstverleihs..." 147-150.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ "Art rental service," *Chicago Art Institute Quarterly* 49 (April 1955): 38.

New York City, whose curatorial staff selected works from 57th Street galleries and obtained them for the lending collection on consignment.⁹⁹

The lending schemes of museums generally placed more restrictions on who could borrow the works than libraries did, perhaps because originals were loaned more often. The most common restriction that appears is that the scheme was only open to museum members, although sometimes non-members could borrow for an additional fee. Of course, if an individual had enough money, he or she could always join the museum to gain access to the lending collection. The Circulating Picture Club of the Philadelphia Art Alliance was open to all, and would ship works to patrons who lived far away. In one article, it is mentioned that the program had borrowers from Indiana to Springfield, Massachusetts.¹⁰⁰ Borrowing was not free in any of the examples found; it was more common to pay a fee scaled to the value of the work being borrowed. The works were almost always for sale, except in cases like Newark in which the works were bought by the museum for the circulating collection. In most cases, if a borrower decided to become a buyer, the price of the rental was deducted from the purchase price.

Museums often gave their reasons for forming a lending collection, unlike libraries. The most frequently-occurring reason was to allow the pleasure of living with original works of art to be available to those who were not generally able to afford it. They aimed to democratize the experience of viewing works of art, so that more people could afford to look at art in a leisurely way in their own homes, instead of having to go

⁹⁹ “Modern Museum inaugurates loan service,” *Art Digest* 25 (May 1, 1951): 18; “Polonius Notwithstanding,” *Art Digest* 26 (May 1, 1952): 5. The curatorial staff included Rene d'Harnoncourt, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Andrew Ritchie, Margaret Miller and Dorothy C. Miller. Dorothy C. Miller learned curation from Dana, and perhaps she became interested in lending schemes during her work at the Newark Museum. She was also married to Holger Cahill.

¹⁰⁰ “Club buys eleven paintings for its circulating collection,” *Art News* 30 (May 14, 1932): 8.

to the gallery, where they could only look at it for a little while. Other commonly-cited reasons included facilitating the meeting of contemporary artists and the public, and helping local people have local art in their homes. These reasons attempted to break down the barrier to the public's understanding of modern art by helping artists meet their potential buying public, giving them the chance to explain their works and obtain a more favorable reception. Another common reason was to help people cultivate their taste. The predicament of the young collector is discussed often in these articles, and the authors mention an individual wanting to have the chance to develop his taste (the potential collector is almost always male), but not wanting to make an expensive mistake while still forming it. The lending schemes thus become part of the visual education of the renter, and form an ideal vehicle for creating an art consumer. An individual might initially not spend much money trying out various works for his collection, but the hope is that some day he will begin to buy works and support artists. Only one museum, the Albright Art Gallery in Buffalo, mentioned creating the lending scheme specifically as a way to boost its membership, although this was likely part of the reason other museums created their schemes.¹⁰¹

These reasons are often somewhat commercial, but I think that their democratizing aspect is at least equal to, if not more important than, their commercial one. Naturally, everyone involved wanted artists to be able to make more money, but I think it is significant that the museums wanted to extend the experience of viewing modern art out of their buildings and into people's homes. In any event, the schemes were rarely large money-making endeavors.

¹⁰¹ "Buffalo's Plan," *Art Digest* 8 (November 15, 1933): 18.

I have grouped collections owned by college and university museums and libraries together. Their aims were often the same, and they worked with the same audience. In addition to these institutions, there were other organizations at work on college campuses that shared similar aims. The International Graphic Arts Society (IGAS) helped to establish lending collections at Wellesley College, Syracuse University, University of Minnesota, Sarah Lawrence College, Indiana University, and Brown University.¹⁰² In this program, IGAS provided an initial selection of American, European, and Japanese prints to the colleges, which then used their own funds to supplement the collection with other contemporary prints.¹⁰³ At Princeton, the student-run print appreciation club began its own lending collection, with the help of faculty, in 1940.¹⁰⁴

A few of these collections were supported at their inception by grants from the Rockefeller Foundation or the Carnegie Corporation. The IGAS program was supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, and the program at Brown University was initially supported by the Carnegie Corporation, although it was later also a beneficiary of the IGAS program. The Carnegie Corporation produced a brochure on picture lending collections, which makes it seem likely that they also supported a number of other such collections during the 1930s.¹⁰⁵ Unfortunately, this brochure could not be located. The extent of the Rockefeller Foundation's support for art lending collections is not known,

¹⁰² Theodore Gusten, "The IGAS print rental program," *College Art Journal* 17 (Summer 1958): 418-421.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ William K. Zinsser, "The graphic arts in a liberal education," *Print* (New York, New York) 4 (1946): 19-22.

¹⁰⁵ "Brown University Pictures," *Art Digest* 11 (1936): 28-29.

and no other cases of their support of such institutions were found beyond the IGAS program.

Most other institutions purchased their collections with money from either the university museum's or the library's budget. The collection at the Fogg Art Museum of Harvard was provided by an alumnus who loaned the works to the university indefinitely.¹⁰⁶

Overall, original works of art were favored for the college collections. The most common kind of art found was contemporary non-local art (no collections were found to contain the work of local artists), followed by reproductions and non-contemporary original art. Where reproductions were used, they were circulated in addition to original works in all but one collection, that of Miami University of Ohio, which only circulated reproductions.¹⁰⁷ Many libraries included reproductions in order to round out their collections of original art. Thus we see the opposite dynamic of that at work in public libraries: whereas public libraries often began by collecting reproductions and branched out into original art, university museums and libraries often began with original art, and used reproductions to fill in holes to make the collection more representative.

Many of the original works loaned were prints, probably because they are generally the most affordable form of original art. A number of programs loaned original, contemporary American prints and watercolors by artists such as O'Keeffe, Demuth, Sheeler, and Rivera. The original non-contemporary art was almost always prints, such as those by Whistler and Goya owned by Lawrence College and those at the

¹⁰⁶ "Fogg stimulates print collecting," *Art News* 32 (June 9, 1934): 8.

¹⁰⁷ "Art loan collections," *Library Journal* (May 1, 1974): 1258-1261.

Fogg by Dürer, Rembrandt, and Whistler.¹⁰⁸ A number of colleges collected whatever original art was available for reasonable prices at the time. In some cases, the results were stunning: Oberlin College was able to collect original prints by Picasso, Miro, Matisse, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Rouault, as well as Japanese prints and Indian miniatures.¹⁰⁹ Southern Illinois University handled the problems that came with selecting original art for a permanent collection by hiring professional art critic Katherine Kuh to select works for the collection.¹¹⁰

The collections were often open only to students, but a number also allowed faculty to borrow pictures, usually after the students had selected their works. Only one institution, Oberlin, opened its collection to town residents after the students and faculty had selected their pictures for the semester.¹¹¹ Loan terms were often for the duration of either the semester or the academic year, and a number of institutions report that the print selection day was very busy, with students lining up hours before the doors opened. When there was a fee associated with the program, it normally ran from \$.25-\$1.00 per term or year. No cases were found in which the works were for sale, probably because the institutions thought of themselves as acquiring a permanent lending collection, more similar to a library than to a commercial gallery.

Many of these institutions gave specific reasons for having their collections. The most frequently-occurring reasons were to help students develop their tastes in art, to

¹⁰⁸ "Fogg stimulates print collecting," *Art News* 32 (June 9, 1934): 8; "Student experiment," *Art Digest* 5 (December 15, 1930): 31; "Art extension Lawrence College," *American Magazine of Art* 22 (January 1931): 46.

¹⁰⁹ "Lending library of pictures," *Allen Memorial Art Museum Bulletin* 14 (1956): 29-30.

¹¹⁰ "Art loan collections," *Library Journal* (May 1, 1974), 1258.

¹¹¹ "Lending library of pictures," *Allen Memorial Art Museum Bulletin* 14 (1956): 29-30.

stimulate the desire to own good art, and, more generally, to foster art appreciation.

Other reasons included promoting the idea that pictures are a natural part of one's surroundings, and, at the Ball State Teacher's College in Muncie, Indiana, to inspire the teachers it trained to start similar lending collections at their own schools.¹¹²

Thus college and university collections shared some of the characteristics of both public library and museum collections. Like public libraries, their aim was to increase knowledge of art and its appreciation. Like museum collections, they emphasized original art and, in some measure, hoped to create a lifelong appreciation of art, which would include buying original works. Unlike both, however, university and college collections often existed to meet a curricular or educational need, whether specified as part of a college course or not. Art forms part of the liberal arts program at many colleges and universities, and the collections were often thought to help create cultured individuals by allowing them to form tastes and have opinions about art.

I think this goes some way toward explaining their emphasis on original works, because reproductions do not serve the same educational goals as originals. Reproductions are often produced only of well-known works, and some colleges certainly purchased them to help students familiarize themselves with the canon. Deciding which original works of art to select and then living with them for a semester forms a different kind of skill. It forces students to ask themselves whether they enjoy living with the work of art or not, and why. It is more a question of developing the faculty of art criticism than of art appreciation, which is certainly a worthy goal in any educational environment. This activity enables the individual to leave college with some basic

¹¹² Evelyn Hoke, "Teaching materials service," *Design* 47 (May 1946): 17.

knowledge of the kinds of art that can be purchased, and what he or she would like to buy. The art establishment would certainly support this goal, but I do not think it is necessary to see it in such a commercial light. The reason students learn the major works of the canon is in part to help them appreciate these works should they later encounter them, but it is also, and perhaps more importantly, to help them appreciate and understand art that is currently being produced.

There were few examples found of subscription libraries. The New York Circulating Library of Pictures came about because two daughters inherited their father's substantial art collection and, not having a place to put 1,200 pictures in their own homes, they decided to circulate them. The library of the College Art Association was formed in the building that housed the association, which represents professional artists and art historians. Three examples were found of bookstores in college towns selling subscriptions to lending collections. I define subscription libraries mainly by what they are not: they are not formally attached to a larger cultural institution, whether this institution is a museum, library, or college. Members pay a fee for access to the library's collection, and borrow within the limits established by the collection.

Kinds of art in these collections could not be generalized due to lack of evidence. The New York Circulating Library of Pictures had contemporary, nineteenth century, and old master paintings from a variety of schools and countries, and "popular, Romantic American painters" were specifically mentioned.¹¹³ The College Art Association's library had contemporary works by artists invited to participate in the scheme.¹¹⁴ The

¹¹³ "Renting," *Art News* 45 (April 1946): 59.

Channel Bookshop in New Haven, Connecticut loaned reproductions of a variety of canonical Western works.¹¹⁵

Most collections were open to anyone, and the only exception found was that of the Vassar Cooperative Bookshop, which was open only to college students.¹¹⁶ Loan terms varied from \$3 per month in the New York plan to prices based on the value of the works being loaned. The College Art Association plan included the purchase of \$1-50 subscriptions, and with a more expensive subscription came the ability to rent better and more works over the term of the subscription.¹¹⁷ The bookstore plans, which were all located in college towns, usually offered loan periods tailored to students' academic years. The prints at the Channel Bookshop were for sale, but whether works in other subscription libraries were for sale could not be determined.

Reasons for operating these collections were seldom specified. In the case of the Channel Bookshop, it rented prints both to make the service available in the community and to draw potential customers into the store.¹¹⁸ The College Art Association implemented its scheme to provide artists with a steadier income.¹¹⁹ It is interesting that these libraries seem to have existed only in places with colleges or with another kind of major art infrastructure, like New York City. The audience for the service already existed, and the subscription library would have had to do little to convince potential

¹¹⁴ "Rent-a-picture library," *Art Digest* 7 (September 1, 1933): 21.

¹¹⁵ Claire Myers Owens, "Channel Bookshop installs rental library of prints," *Publishers' Weekly* 151 (1974): 160-162.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ "Rent-a-picture library," *Art Digest* 7 (September 1, 1933): 21.

¹¹⁸ Owens, 160-162.

¹¹⁹ "Rent-a-picture library," *Art Digest* 7 (September 1, 1933): 21.

members of the value of the service. They did not need to market the service as heavily as libraries in other locations might have.

The final two institutions I discuss in this chapter have only a single example, which does not permit any generalization about them. Instead I present available information about each. The first is the Willard Gallery in New York City, which launched its service in 1935, and was still offering it in 1955.¹²⁰ Marion Willard, proprietor of the gallery, periodically selected groups of contemporary work from the gallery and made them available for rent. The works were naturally available for sale, and cost \$5-10 per month. Half of the cost of the rental went to the artist, and the fee was deducted from the price if the renter chose to buy. No formal restrictions were made on who could borrow, although the price was more than most other lending galleries and thus was probably only available to wealthier clients. Only in one article is a reason for the lending collection given: to help new collectors avoid making expensive mistakes while forming their tastes.¹²¹

The final, and perhaps most unique scheme, is Rockwell Kent, Inc. Rockwell Kent was an artist who had previously been a businessman and brought his business sense to the world of art. He figured out that if he made four percent net on the rental of his paintings, it would be cheaper than his expenses for storing them.¹²² He incorporated himself and began renting out paintings on those terms. Of course, if a patron decided he or she wanted to keep the painting, he was happy to sell it. Kent later participated in the lending scheme of the Rochester Memorial Art Gallery, and it is uncertain whether he

¹²⁰ "Paintings for rent," *Arts Digest* 29 (January 15, 1955): 29-30.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² "Rockwell Kent, Inc.," *Art Digest* 11 (April 15, 1937): 22.

later rented his works only through the gallery, or whether he continued to lend them on his own terms.¹²³

Thus we begin to get an idea of the number of ways it was possible for individuals to borrow art from roughly 1895-1975. Many of the collections examined were tied to the ideals and professional values of their sponsoring institution. Libraries were home to the largest variety of collections, many of which were developed to serve a specific need. The breadth of many libraries' missions and their close contact with the public may account for the variety observed in their collections. In the next chapter, I make some preliminary observations about why such an apparently thriving network of lending schemes is no longer so active.

¹²³ "Rochester opens lending library of American art," *Museum News* 19 (December 1, 1941): 2.

IV. The recent history of lending collections.

The fact remains that despite records of the widespread practice of art lending into the 1970s, few library patrons or librarians are familiar with ongoing art lending efforts at their libraries. This chapter examines a few common fates of the collections, but is not comprehensive. Many institutions enthusiastically announced the formation and successful functioning of their collections, but few could be expected to write articles about the programs' demise. Without contacting each institution that once housed a collection and asking them to find out what became of their collection, the only evidence I have are occasional mentions of what was once a picture lending program in an article devoted to a different purpose.

In at least one case, a collection survived and prospered. The New York Public Library Picture Collection still exists, and in 2003 had 800,000 circulating and 200,000 archival pictures in its collection.¹²⁴ It was the recipient of a 2003 Institute of Museum and Library Services grant to digitize 30,000 images, and the result is a fully-searchable database (<http://digital.nypl.org/mmpco/>). It uses 12,000 subject headings, and is also searchable by image title, name, author, and title.¹²⁵ The library states that this collection is used primarily by “artists, illustrators, designers, teachers, students, and

¹²⁴ “New York Public to digitize 30,000 images,” *Advanced Technology Libraries* 32 (April 2003), 3.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

general researchers.”¹²⁶ It appears that heavy use and a reliance on its services have preserved the New York Public Library’s image collection. They have also enabled it, through the online database, to reach a public that could not access it before. It is fitting that the collection that spawned the *Index of American Design* should be the first to make such a resource widely, and freely, available to the public.

It appears that some other image collections were assumed into archives and special collections, either at their own institution or another that acquired them. Many of the specialized collections created by Dana and his successors at Newark, like the shopping bag collection, were later transferred to a special collections department. Often these transfers occurred to preserve the materials, which were sometimes fragile and in need of conservation. These collections remained open to visitors who needed to use them at the library, and to the public through exhibitions mounted periodically.

It is likely that the majority of collections eventually perished from a lack funds to replenish them. The 1974 *Library Journal* article mentions that the collection of “one major library system” had not had funds allocated to it for some time, and that consequently patrons were losing interest in it.¹²⁷ The author goes on to caution librarians that, “If funding for collection building is not secured on a regular basis, this is a situation which could face any library.”¹²⁸ If patrons had already checked out and taken home the images that interested them in the collection, and no new images were added to it, it is easy to see how the collections would fall into disuse.

¹²⁶ New York Public Library Mid-Manhattan Branch, “Picture collection online: a new frontier.” Available at: <http://digital.nypl.org/mmpco/about.cfm>. Accessed Oct. 20, 2006.

¹²⁷ “Art loan collections,” *Library Journal* (May 1, 1974): 1260.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

Another possibility is that the funds for picture collections were reallocated to other non-book collections. In the *Library Journal* article, it is mentioned that the Oklahoma County Libraries made no allocation for reproductions in 1973, spending the money instead on 8 millimeter films and cassettes.¹²⁹ Over time, it is likely that picture collections received fewer appropriations, and that other media collections received more. In many libraries, the art collection was the first non-book format to be collected, and perhaps it was thought that all non-book materials would share the same collection development money. This appears to be the most likely fate of many collections, and in this way they can be understood as the forerunners of collections of compact discs, VCR tapes, and DVDs. Undoubtedly, watching a movie or listening to a recording does not provide the same kind of experience as living with a work of art, but perhaps these collections were thought to be easier to build, maintain, and store over the long term.

A similar fate most likely befell collections of reference images. The amount of time and effort required to maintain these collections was enormous. Librarians and their assistants had to spend time combing through discarded books and magazines for images to add to the collection, and once the images were clipped, they often had to be mounted and then classified by subject and cross-referenced, if appropriate. A cut to budget or staff could cause the collection to become outdated quickly. Because these collections often needed to maintain their currency to be useful to working professionals, they would quickly become obsolete if not constantly kept up.

In schools, where images often served curricular needs, the use of the image collection likely decreased as textbooks began to include more pictures and as posters

¹²⁹ Ibid.

became cheaper to produce and buy. Additionally, unless a local librarian made an effort to reach out to teachers and interest them in using the collection, teachers often failed to realize how pictures could contribute to their students' learning. Use of pictures may have been encouraged later in teachers' colleges, like the one at Ball State mentioned in chapter three, but in an era before teachers were trained to be aware of different learning styles, pictures could be seen more as decoration than as a way of learning. Thus, although some great picture collections were begun with the intention of reaching out to schools, it appears that schools seldom reached out to libraries with a call for picture collections. It is not difficult to see, in these circumstances, how the use of picture collections in schools diminished with time.

The demise of museum collections is more difficult to account for, because no indications exist in that literature that the programs were ever in trouble. The most likely explanation I can theorize is the rising cost of art insurance. Many of the rental fees for original works of art were scaled to their value, and as art insurance became more expensive, as it undoubtedly has, it may have become too expensive to continue operating the programs. Costs would either have to be absorbed by the institution or passed on to the renter. Many museums operate on a thin margin, and they may not have been able to justify the rise in insurance costs unless the programs were enormously popular. Passing the additional costs on to the renter may have made it too expensive for many to continue renting works. A combination of such factors would have led the programs to become less popular over time, and difficult for the museums to justify, thus leading to their closing. Other organizations that also lent original works likely closed their collections for the same reasons.

V. Conclusions and future directions.

In this final chapter, I begin by discussing a lingering question that remained after all of the historical data had been compiled and analyzed. Then I discuss future directions in which this research could be taken, and finally present some concluding thoughts.

In examining any historical phenomenon, looking at what did not happen can be as interesting as looking at what did happen. For me, the most interesting question to emerge from this study related to John Cotton Dana, and it was why this innovative librarian and museum educator never created a lending program for contemporary art in Newark. Dana curated some of the most innovative shows of modern art during the 1910s. One of these was a show of “The Eight” (which included artists later known as the Ashcan School) and other modernists in February 1910, which was the first time a public museum in the New York area showed these artists.¹³⁰ He also collected work by and organized shows of Max Weber and Stuart Davis, important early American modernists, despite admitting to not fully understanding their work.¹³¹ He was concerned with the place of the artist in American culture, and used the museum to expose modern artists’ work to a broader public. It seems that he would find it natural to seek to increase exposure to modern art by circulating it among library patrons, but such was not the case. In an unexpectedly argued pamphlet, *American Art, how it can be made to flourish*, Dana

¹³⁰ Holger Cahill, “John Cotton Dana and the Newark Museum,” in *A Museum in Action* (Newark: Newark Museum, 1944), 16.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

argues that great American art does not exist because no one buys it, drawing on the example of art patronage in Renaissance Italy.¹³² Instead of going on to suggest ways to build up patronage for the fine arts in the United States, he argues that in order to form an aesthetic taste, people should begin by studying the objects that surround them, beginning with their tea cups.¹³³ From here, an appreciation for line and color would follow, and eventually people will be able to enjoy the aesthetic aspects of their surroundings more perceptively. No mention is ever made of patronizing living American artists. This argument fits with his emphasis on appreciating good design, which he thought could be found in commercially-produced products, as well as in fine art. It is true that some of the people he wanted to reach out to in Newark, such as the large immigrant population, really stood very little chance of being able to afford original art of any kind. In these circumstances, it was insightful of him to encourage them to develop an aesthetic sense, and to exercise it when purchasing mass-made objects for use in their daily lives. Newark was also had plenty of citizens who could afford fine art, though, especially modern art, which was not much valued at the time. Perhaps Dana's acute business sense told him that artists would not make money off of the rental of their works in the library or the museum, but why he would not choose to expand interest in art this way remains a mystery to me.

There are three ways in which I would expand the present study if the time and resources were available. The first would be to include a social history of the practice of borrowing pictures for display in the home. The bits of information I have found have

¹³² John Cotton Dana, *American Art, How it Can be Made to Flourish* (Woodstock, VT: Elm Tree Press, 1929), 12-16.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 29.

been very interesting. One article details the results of a plan by the Morse Gallery at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida to bring innovative modernist works from New York galleries and put them in the homes of community members.¹³⁴ Individuals kept the works in their home for a month, and at the end of the month were interviewed by the curator. Their reactions are included in the article, which shows their attempts to understand the art and how it affected them. I find this program particularly interesting because it relates what people who had little background in art thought about living with modern American artists like Jackson Pollock, and does not assume that people need a background in art to understand or appreciate his work. I would like to know more about contemporary beliefs about the place of art in daily life, and whether the experience of living with it changed their ideas. This kind of material could be gathered from a variety of sources, including art periodicals, women's magazines, manuals of home economy, and personal writings. If libraries had any information about how their collections were used, that would also be helpful.

A second way to expand the study would be to conduct a survey of institutions to see what became of their collections. This would permit me to make broader generalizations about the causes of the demise of these collections.

Finally, it would be interesting to conduct a survey of libraries to see which ones might still be offering the service, or might be offering it again after a hiatus. This would allow me to see if the emphasis of these services is similar now to in the past, or whether it is different. I suspect that the circulation of reproductions of works of art no longer features prominently in many programs. This is likely because posters reproducing

¹³⁴ "Paintings at work for three weeks," *Art News* 50 (May 1951): 22-25.

works of art are now comparatively cheap, and many people already have reproductions of their favorite works. I assume that programs working with local artists to publicize their works would be more popular, especially if artists were able to sell some of their works through the library.

What was most striking to me in all the accounts I read of this practice, and what I hope I have shown in this paper, is both the broad range of kinds of art lending services, and the profoundly democratic views they held about art. Many of these institutions not only wanted to increase peoples' exposure to art, they wanted to extend the ability to view works of art into the domestic sphere. This is now an experience largely reserved for the wealthy, with few questions asked. It is unfortunately true today that the original art many people will spend the most time with is the deliberately inoffensive kind that hangs in hotel rooms and dentist's offices. Now, more than ever, artists and their supporting institutions would do well to consider alternative ways of reaching the public, including through art lending.

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