



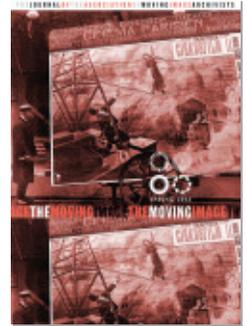
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Ephemera as Medium: The Afterlife of Lost Films

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4. An amendment to copyright law on August 24, 1912, marked a transition away from submitting copies of individual films to submitting select images from scenes of a given film.
5. Information like this can be found online in the *Catalog of Copyright Entries Motion Pictures 1912–1939*, <https://archive.org/details/motionpict19121939librrich/>.
6. Loughney, “A Descriptive Analysis,” 327.
7. Though this title was the second copyright submission, it was the 218th AFC production.
8. See Paolo Cherchi Usai, *Silent Cinema: An Introduction* (London: British Film Institute, 2000), 67.
9. The AFC distributed worldwide. Camera negatives would be shipped from Santa Barbara to Chicago where domestic prints would be made. Then the negative would be sent to the London office, where foreign prints were created.
10. <http://www.filmmandmedia.ucsb.edu/flyinga/>.
11. <http://digital.library.ucsb.edu/collections/show/10>.
12. Special credit goes to the Library of Congress Preservation Directorate’s Dana Hemenway, lead conservationist on the fragment project, and the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division’s Greg Lukow and Mike Mashon, for their ongoing dedication to the paper fragments project.

Ephemera as Medium

The Afterlife of Lost Films

PAUL S. MOORE

Early cinema culture was as ephemeral as nitrate film was flammable. Traces of early film practices are hidden in print ephemera, whose recent digitization has opened the possibility of recovering lost histories of lost films by unknown filmmakers. Two following examples reshape the contours of Canada’s early cinema history. In methodological terms, my point is to ask how this type of research is related to the orphan film movement, given that these are examples of lost films without extant film prints. Because my research didn’t begin in the film archive, are these examples really orphan films? Phrased polemically, are these lost films orphaned by the orphan film movement? The concept of “orphans” may be broadened and strengthened by a methodological approach that begins with ephemera of all forms, not only orphaned, archived film prints. My work does not begin with extant films but instead relies on the novel power of digital searches of local newspapers combined with sometimes naive searches and colleagues’ informed hunches to bring neglected knowledge of lost films to light. Like the orphan film movement, collegial sharing and intuitive browsing lay a foundation for ephemera to be the medium by which lost films may at last gain an afterlife.

AN ORPHANED FILMMAKER: RICHARD A. HARDIE’S PIONEERING CINEMA IN MANITOBA

In the past, I have advocated for the history of cinema in Canada to become focused on exhibition and how practices of showmen and audiences together created film publics.¹ I had presumed that there was simply not enough filmmaking to sustain a national project centered on films as texts. There are too few cases of films made in Canada and far fewer archived copies of what little was produced.² As I turned to documenting early exhibition sites on a national scale, I was surprised to find examples of early local view-making in the Western Prairies and on the East Coast. Looking for early

cinema showmen, coast to coast, I inadvertently, through robust results of digital searches of archived newspapers, found examples of lost films. I was not expecting to find a pioneer filmmaker when I naively asked a colleague, Robert Seiler, when were the earliest moving pictures he knew to be shown in the Canadian Prairies. None were noted before 1899 in published histories, but Seiler graciously shared a note he had found for Edison's Vitascope in Brandon, Manitoba, in 1896.³ "Impossible!" I initially thought, but then I found a notice even a little earlier in Winnipeg, and then others in smaller towns that mentioned the showman: Richard A. Hardie. Iteratively and collectively, digital searches of the region's newspapers pieced together his story.

Hardie had toured throughout Manitoba with an Edison phonograph in 1892 and 1893, before arranging the Canadian debut of Edison's Vitascope in Winnipeg in July 1896 (before its better-known debut in Ottawa) while touring elsewhere for at least four weeks (all before its debut in Toronto). In 1897, Hardie turned his attention to making local films as well as exhibiting them. He paired his kinoscope with the Cosgrove Comedy Company, just as it was about to embark on a repeat tour of the region. At the same time, Hardie also made a series of local views, hiring Edward Amet, the Illinois maker of the Magniscope, an early independent projector. Amet spent a week in Manitoba training Hardie, and together they made a total of more than two dozen scenes: the Canadian Pacific express train approaching Carberry, the Winnipeg Fire Brigade, and pictures of Manitoba premier Thomas Greenway stooking wheat on his own farm. Hardie gave the film an official debut to a gathering of business, railway, and government officials in September 1897.

After a tour across the prairies with Cosgrove, Hardie went to Montreal to fund-raise for a railway-sponsored immigration venture and there hired James S. Freer to lecture and accompany the show in England to promote immigration and settlement to western Canada. Freer was established as a lantern slide lecturer and was an immigrant himself, unlike Hardie or Cosgrove. Playbills and posters of Freer's "Ten Years in Manitoba" lectures in the United Kingdom are archived and relatively

well known. Indeed, Freer's lectures were the only aspect of this entire story mentioned in previous histories of film in Canada. Hardie was forgotten as the filmmaker of the Manitoba films in 1897—and forgotten as the showman who brought Edison's Vitascope to Canada when he showed moving pictures to Manitoba in 1896, and to the entire prairies in 1897. Freer was presumed the filmmaker, while Hardie had been buried in the small print of archived newspapers, until today's digital search engines gave him a new life.

AN ORPHANED PRACTICE: VITAGRAPH'S LOCAL VIEWS IN THE MARITIMES AND NEWFOUNDLAND

In other cases, too, the production of local views is remarkably well archived but hidden in the fine print of newspapers' local gossip columns. I've connected partial, passing mentions of local films made in more than a dozen localities to reveal, on the East Coast of Canada in 1904 and 1905, a brief but systematic adoption of local views by the dominant film company of the day.⁴ Again, the starting point was a question asked in idle curiosity. When, I wondered, were the first moving pictures made in my hometown of St. John's, Newfoundland? Online, I found the smallest note in a column of local happenings from *St. John's Telegram* on June 24, 1905: "The American Vitagraph Company's photographer expects to secure a picture of Water Street from the electric cars to-day; also a view of to-day's Express." Again, my first thought was, "Impossible!" How could such a big company be exhibiting, and making films even, on the geographic margins of the continent? Further searches of online historic newspapers confirmed that Vitagraph had, in fact, made extensive tours in eastern Canada in 1904 and 1905, making films and exhibiting them on return engagements. One of the earliest, almost imperceptible headings, "Want Picture of Firemen," came in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, in the *Sydney Herald* from May 27, 1904: "The volunteer fire department of the city have been asked to give an exhibition of their skill before a moving picture machine which will arrive here next week." Such miniscule notes of local filming followed Vitagraph's exhibition circuit across all four present-day provinces in

Atlantic Canada in at least a dozen cities and towns, in almost all cases the first locally made films. Here in the Maritimes, Vitagraph pioneered a short-lived venture incorporating local views into its variety shows, briefly promoting “See Yourself as Others See You” as the primary reason to attend a moving picture show. Although the *Saint John Sun* had strenuously touted the possibilities for tourism and investment as it cajoled its readers to get ready to be filmed, its review of the resulting films from April 17, 1905, was dismissive: “These, with the exception of the falls and harbor, are of almost wholly local interest, and do not bring before outsiders any of the attractions of the city.” The “almost wholly local” Vitagraph films of the Maritimes and Newfoundland are ephemeral in every sense. They are not extant or available in archives. The specific films were shown only briefly and only in a few locations; indeed, they have probably not been viewed since their brief public moment. They have gone almost entirely without notice by local historical societies as well as academic film historians.⁵

The local film as a genre was only a fleeting part of the Vitagraph program.⁶ Just weeks after ending its 1905 Maritime tour, American Vitagraph turned its attention to distribution rather than local exhibition, effectively shutting down its itinerant circuits to take advantage of the emerging market for rented fiction films.⁷ Instead of local views shown locally, Vitagraph and all mainstream film producers subsequently turned exclusively to general interest views and fictional narrative films that could be reproduced and distributed globally. The curious dabbling with local views just before this shift only becomes evident in the amassed local trivia made available through digital newspaper searches.

A CASE FOR EPHEMERA AS MEDIUM OF LOST FILMS

Are lost films orphaned by the orphan film movement? The spirit of rediscovering ephemeral films is at the heart of efforts to study orphan films, but does this extend to lost films only known through ephemeral documents? Orphan films have been deliberately left undefined to include the efforts of as many like-minded scholars, archivists, and enthusiasts

as possible under the general banner of preserving films left on the margins. The Orphan Film Symposium, for example, refuses to limit its purview, offering first a deceptively simple notion of “a motion picture abandoned by its owner or caretaker,” then quickly expanded to the following:

More generally, the term refers to all manner of films outside of the commercial mainstream: public domain materials, home movies, outtakes, unreleased films, industrial and educational movies, independent documentaries, ethnographic films, newsreels, censored material, underground works, experimental pieces, silent-era productions, stock footage, found footage, medical films, kinescopes, small- and unusual-gauge films, amateur productions, surveillance footage, test reels, government films, advertisements, sponsored films, student works, and sundry other ephemeral pieces of celluloid (or paper or glass or tape or . . .).⁸

The unwieldy definition is an open invitation to almost anyone studying almost any aspect of historic or nontheatrical film. And yet, one aspect is remarkably normative in the methods and paradigms used to study orphan films: despite the openness of the object in terms of what is depicted, an orphan film is always an object. In the research and exhibitions and projects spurred by the mandate to protect and preserve orphan films, the basic starting point is found footage— orphaned, nameless, abandoned, and undocumented, but found, not lost. By definition, orphans are archived or archivable films. Strictly by this measure, my work doesn’t fit, because I’m not able to help an archive adopt them—I can only provide a spectral afterlife for films through the medium of ephemeral documents.

Dan Streible, Orphan Symposium founder and organizer, indirectly acknowledged this limit case in recounting how the orphan film movement began as an outgrowth of film preservation:

In 1993, the phrase peppered the hearings that preceded the publication of *Redefining Film Preservation: A National*

Plan, which formally categorized orphan films as a problem child for archives. This led to the creation of the National Film Preservation Foundation in 1997. The foundation's success has made it easier for everyone interested in cinema beyond the contemporary Hollywood feature to discuss, even to legitimize, their work in wider forums.⁹

Thus the term emerged out of the archives as a metaphor to describe the work of film archivists and preservationists. Historians, scholars, artists, and policy makers hopped aboard to aid the cause of film preservation. But the orphan film movement was a project that put film as a material object first.

One of the lessons learned from the Orphan symposia is how “the professional boundaries between academic, archivist, and artist are best blurred.”¹⁰ And yet, with my research on lost film practices that do not have extant films, I find it hard to imagine collaborating with archivists or visual artists. To the contrary, the prospect makes me confront how I'm undertaking a very traditional academic project with very little opportunity for experimental revisionist filmmaking or archival preservation. Attempting to place myself within the orphan paradigm seems only to reinforce a divide between film preservation and histories of film culture. This need not be so.

In this very Forum, Eric Smoodin recently considered “writing film histories without films,” given the ready availability of online collections. He concluded that the “archival turn” in film studies was “not so much a move away from the film archive as an expansion of the archive to include so many more materials and texts.”¹¹ In this sense, can't the orphaned film *print* be redefined as just one type of ephemera suitable for the study of orphaned film culture? Can't the spirit and approach of orphan film research be expanded to include histories of lost films, forgotten filmmakers, and ephemeral film practices? Would such a shift inevitably abandon collaborations with professional film preservationists and archivists? Could we not all begin with the *curiosity* of the researcher–archivist–artist, rather than with the material object of the film itself? What, then, would our common methodological prin-

ciples be? Wouldn't we all take the periphery as the center of cinema culture, beginning with chance rather than intention as our motivation, and proceeding according to opportunity rather than following a prescribed protocol for our method? In recounting Hardie's and Vitagraph's stories, the finished histories might seem to have a veneer of retrospective intentionality and deterministic foresight. Yet, these are just two successful results of hundreds of naive searches in newspaper databases. Their coherence and significance was built iteratively over years of searching across many different local sources. The narratives I presented herein began entirely as puzzles, and worse, puzzles for which I had no idea what the finished picture would resemble when I started, puzzles without any hint of how big the frame was or how many pieces were needed. The sources were ephemeral, dispersed, localized, and in turn the research itself was ephemeral—akin to browsing, lacking direction, open to happenstance. The coherent stories of “the man who brought film to Manitoba” and “Vitagraph's local film experiment” only became evident to me over time, through the process of browsing and keeping my eye on the margins of my sources rather than seeking a headlined, feature article explaining all the details. This esteem for the residual, this curiosity about the apparently trivial, seems to be what I share with orphan film research. In that spirit, I propose some principles for ephemera as a medium of film history:

- If you have the time and resources, idle curiosity can be your guiding principle.
- No detail is too trivial.
- No search is futile.
- No collegial question is a bother.
- No browsing is entirely random.
- What you need to know is always there, somewhere.

It is vital to recognize that my examples from early filmmaking in Canada derived from seeking out the most ephemeral, passing mentions of the subject in every newspaper remaining in their regions in the period, then linking the partial, trivial citations together to reveal the structured industrial and cultural work. Even in marginal locations, early filmmaking

was intended for commercial exploitation, although especially in marginal locations, early exhibitions circulated in relatively restricted regional contexts. Treating sources as ephemera esteems browsing—the chance hit of online search engines and web browsing, the eclectic mix of microfilmed newspapers, and the rare gem of detail amid the bureaucratic or random collection of archived files. To the researcher of ephemeral film culture, such browsing turns up a curious event, at first out of context, that is the equivalent of the orphaned film print, unlabeled in an archive, basement, or flea market. Yet, the unmethodical character of ephemeral searching contains its own methodology, turning up new notes, new bits of information—each new curiosity allowing repeated methodical turns in the archives.

Paul S. Moore is an associate professor of communication and culture at Ryerson University in Toronto. His research focuses on the intermediality of early moviegoing and newspaper reading, including projects on the American Sunday paper and its supplements, and the geometries of cinema distribution from early itinerants to chain theaters.

NOTES

The impetus for this argument was an invitation from Zoë Druick and Charles Acland to participate in a roundtable on “Moving Image Ephemera” at the 2010 conference of the Film Studies Association of Canada. As with much ephemeral reflective work, it risked being orphaned itself, and I am grateful it’s found a home in this Forum.

1. On this point, and an earlier overview of Richard A. Hardie in regional and national contexts, see Paul S. Moore, “Mapping the Mass Circulation of Early Cinema: Film Debuts Coast-to-Coast in Canada in 1896 and 1897,” *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 21, no. 1 (2012): 58–80, and also Paul S. Moore, “The Flow of Amusement: The First Year of Cinema in the Red River Valley,” in *Beyond the Border: Tensions across the 49th Parallel*, ed. K. Conway and T. Pasch, 71–89 (Montreal, Quebec: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2013).

2. The loss of many known silent-era films in Canada stems from a disastrous fire at the National Film Board of Canada in 1967. See Michele Wozny, “National Audiovisual Preservation Initiatives and the Independent Media Arts in Canada,” *Archivaria* 67 (2009): 97.

3. Robert and Tamara Seiler, *Reel Time: Movie Exhibitors and Movie Audiences in Prairie Canada, 1896 to 1986* (Edmonton, Alberta: Athabasca University Press, 2013).

4. The case of Vitagraph local views in wider context is forthcoming as Paul S. Moore, “A ‘Distant Reading’ of the ‘Chaser Theory’: Local Views and the Digital Generation of New Cinema History,” in *Technology and Film Scholarship*, ed. A. Gaudreault and S. Hidalgo (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, forthcoming). Elsewhere, I explain the “noteworthy” appearance of early cinema in small-town newspapers as part of a methodology typifying newspaper–community–cinema relations in terms of the “newsworthy” logic of the metropolitan daily press and the “adworthy” logic of small-city newspapers. See Paul S. Moore, “The Social Biograph: Newspapers as Archives of the Regional Mass Market for Movies,” in *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*, ed. R. Maltby, P. Meers, and D. Biltereyst, 263–79 (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

5. See Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 405, and Charles Musser and Carol Nelson, *High-Class Moving Pictures: Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Traveling Exhibition, 1880–1920* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 150–52.

6. For histories of local views produced in later years by marginal itinerant filmmakers, see Dwight Swanson, “‘Wasn’t That a Funny Thing That We Did?’: Oral Histories of Itinerant Filmmaking,” *The Moving Image* 10, no. 1 (2010): 102–14, and Martin Johnson, “The Places You’ll Know: From Self-Recognition to Place Recognition in the Local Film,” *The Moving Image* 10, no. 1 (2010): 24–50.

7. Charles Musser, “American Vitagraph, 1897–1901,” *Cinema Journal* 22, no. 3 (1983): 40.

8. Devin Orgeron, “Conference Report: Orphans Take Manhattan, 6th Annual Orphan

Film Symposium, 2008,” *Cinema Journal* 48, no. 2 (2009): 114.

9. Dan Streible, “The Role of Orphan Films in the 21st-Century Archive,” *Cinema Journal* 46, no. 3 (2007): 124; see also Brian Real, “From Colorization to Orphans: The Evolution of American Public Policy on Film Preservation,” *The Moving Image* 13, no. 1 (2013): 129–50.

10. Streible, “Role of Orphan Films,” 125.

11. Eric Smoodin, “As the Archive Turned: Writing Film Histories without Films,” *The Moving Image* 14, no. 2 (2014): 99–100.

Méliès’s *Voyage Restoration* or, *The Risk of Being Stuck in* *the Digital Reconstruction*

MARTIN BONNARD

Extending the now frequent use of the digital at every step of the film heritage conservation and exhibition processes, DVD releases and online viewing give restored films a new visibility.¹ This increase in accessibility raises questions about the very form of access, in particular, how digital circulation of archival films can paradoxically lead to their isolated viewing.

This article aims to study three remediations of Méliès’s *Voyage dans la Lune*: a restoration made in 2011 and its subsequent actualizations as extracts in Martin Scorsese’s feature film *Hugo* (2011) and a viewable entry in the catalog of the cinephile online service Fandor. The film’s rich history and the debate started by the digital restoration made by Serge Bromberg (Lobster Films), Tom Burton (Technicolor), and their teams make of Méliès’s 1902 artwork an interesting object. I would like to show how the restoration and its paratexts invite the spectator to a particular point of view on the film. In the case of an online viewing and without contextual information, the restoration can block the spectator’s gaze, failing to point toward Méliès’s *Voyage* as a historical object.

After a brief presentation of the film’s circulation, I consider the restoration process and some of the contradictory opinions made on the final work. Serge Bromberg’s comment about the use of digital restoration tools to give

a more direct access to the past will then serve as an entry point to assess the risk in producing a movie detached from its historical context. The three remediations explored in this article either remedy or increase the movie’s isolation, reducing the spectator’s chance to further explore the past.

VOYAGE’S MULTIPLE VARIANTS

Soon after the first screenings of Méliès’s *Trip to the Moon*, in 1902, at the Théâtre Robert-Houdin in Paris, copies were sold to entrepreneurs from all around the globe. Unauthorized duplication and screenings assured the film a rapid circulation, notably in the United States.²

Following Méliès’s financial difficulties and the destruction of a large part of his original film materials in 1923, the rediscovery of his works, starting with the 1929 now famous “Méliès Gala,” had to build on the remaining distributed prints. In 1937, when the Museum of Modern Art Film Library sent a copy of the film to the Cinémathèque Française, “the film had followed a circuitous path of duplication, from London to New York to Paris, through the hands of several collectors and institutions, in order to belatedly return to its creator.”³ The film’s early success and its continuous screening through patrimonial institutions, for instance, the Museum of Modern Art Film Library, contributed to its celebration as one of the “canons of world cinema.”⁴ Nevertheless, cinephiles and film historians had to wait until 1997 to watch a complete version of the film as reconstructed by the Cinémathèque Méliès. Now that we can grasp the entire structure of the film, we can understand how, for much of its history, missing scenes (especially at the end) changed the overall experience of the film.⁵ The path *Voyage* followed, with multiple variations coexisting during the beginning of the twentieth century and afterward, follows a logic shared by many other films made during the period.

A CONTROVERSIAL RESTORATION

Three cooperating institutions, the Technicolor Foundation for Cinema Heritage, Groupama Gan Foundation for Cinema, and Lobster Films, premiered the latest restoration in 2011. It is