
The Motion Pictures of the United States Information Agency: Studying a Global Film and Television Operation

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Abstract

This introduction ambitiously explores historical, legal, and theoretical dimensions of the United States Information Agency's (USIA) motion picture operations and archives, framing and contextualizing the scope and contents of the *Journal of e-Media Studies* special issue. In doing so, it draws from the agency's vast archival paper trail, employs close readings of select film titles, integrates audiovisual supplements, and maps the growing but fragmented body of scholarly literature concerning the agency. Although organized as a top-down propaganda agency, the USIA's motion picture output—totaling to nearly 20,000 titles and legally withheld from domestic distribution until the 1990s—was multi-genre, thematically and stylistically heterogeneous, and a function of often-competing international and local interests. Spanning over half a century of Cold War histories, the study of USIA motion pictures cannot be reduced to a single ideology or historiographic approach. Therefore, after tracing key historical threads, this introduction suggests three productive but adaptable theoretical lenses by which to engage the archive. First, it explores the concept of "moving image diplomacy," which functions loosely as a transitional lexicon that synthesizes the Cold War concepts of public and cultural diplomacy with contemporary iterations of film and media. Second, it delineates the agency's complicated relationship to Hollywood, arguing how we can make these connections more visible and transpose the familiar historiographies of Hollywood studies toward the motion picture output and systems of USIA. Third, due to the agency's concerted investment in documentary format, the introduction defines a theory of the "universalizing documentary," unpacking the ideological ramifications of the US government narrating both American and multinational stories exclusively for international audiences.

One of the largest and farthest-reaching motion picture operations of the twentieth century has remained one of the most invisible within film and media studies. The United States Information Agency (USIA) worked in over 150 nations¹ and sixty languages, employed thousands of multinational artists and administrators, and at its peak reached nearly one fifth of the world's population annually. However, its history rarely registers within our accounts of the Cold War. Tasked with "telling America's story" throughout the world, USIA created, circulated, and curated several media through a robust bureaucratic and technological infrastructure. Among these media, motion pictures served as one of the agency's most prolific, expensive, and (according to some) effective outlets.² Between 1953 and 1999, USIA produced or distributed approximately twenty thousand moving image titles throughout the world. The expanse of USIA motion pictures, as this special issue will begin to show, covers an eclectic range of subject matter in a variety of cinematic idioms. Although ostensibly working within the parameters of propaganda, the films within this complicated and diverse corpus constitutively participated in what we define as "moving image diplomacy." As scholars have begun to unpack the agency's genealogies and trace its legacies, they have found a compelling domain through which to expand, complicate, and decentralize many of the paradigms that have shaped the field of film and media studies and the entrenched historiographies of the Cold

War.

In its wake, USIA left an incredible archive of moving images and a fittingly massive paper trail, yet film and media scholars have granted relatively little attention to the corpus. Legal and logistical realities within the United States during much of the twentieth century played a key factor in the paucity of research. The congressional bill that launched the agency—the Smith–Mundt Act of 1948—not only established the framework of what became USIA in 1953, it also tacitly prohibited the domestic distribution of its media within the boundaries of the nation that funded it. Before a 1990 amendment began to thaw the ban,³ research on the motion pictures was understandably difficult to pursue. Although the National Archives in College Park, Maryland, have continued herculean efforts to preserve, organize, and make available USIA materials materially and digitally,⁴ the majority of titles remain on film reels or videos that must be viewed in person. Even more, several titles are likely still located at residual archival spaces in which the agency operated throughout the world, mostly unavailable to the public today. In addition to these barriers, the scale of the agency’s prodigious filmic output and correspondingly complex transnational histories has only exacerbated its invisibility. The seeming impenetrability of a diffuse global archive holding thousands of films and bursting with contradictions has perhaps informed an impulse to label the collection under reductive conceptualizations of “government film” or “propaganda.”

Building on the recent burst of scholarship and the efforts at the National Archives, the variety of invaluable contributions within this issue highlight the breadth of historical, theoretical, and methodological opportunities possible through USIA materials, repudiating assumptions of an aesthetically and ideologically homogeneous archive. Brian Real opens our article section, detailing the complicated role USIA motion pictures played at Expo '67 through the story of its chief designer, Jack Masey. Embodied in the production of the three-screen *A Time to Play* (1967), Masey’s journey highlights compelling tensions between bureaucracy, personalities, politics, and art. Sueyoung Park-Primiano defines the “tentacular reach” of USIS motion picture infrastructure in South Korea, tracing its foundations and mapping out its place within the wider information and military ecosystem between 1940 and 1960. I-Lin Liu, looking at the films and programming of a transnational “experimental” film screening put on by USIS in Taipei in 1973, interrogates the agency’s role as curator and how “experimental” may be conceptualized within a governmental rationale. And through fascinating primary sources, Jülide Etem investigates what the connection between the Educational Film, Radio, and Television Center (EFRTC) and USIS in Turkey can tell us about governmental media infrastructure and the fraught notion of education through film. In the following section, an expert array of archivists and scholars describe personal, procedural, and cultural details of their experiences with the global moving image archive, detailing the plurality of these spaces and underscoring the necessity of interdisciplinary and transnational research frameworks. Lastly, in a closer examination of day-to-day agency operations and USIA historiography, our Conversations section features two interviews with former agency officials, Peter Vaselopulos and Chas Freeman, and another with Nick Cull, author of the seminal book *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*.⁵

We, the editors, hope this issue serves as an invitation to explore the domain of USIA moving images and contributes to a growing community of international scholars, archivists, filmmakers, and citizens collectively unfolding and narrating the legacies of the motion pictures of the US Information Agency.

Key History, Context, and Concepts related to USIA Motion Pictures

Given its expansive transnational operations over nearly fifty years, the historicization of the USIA motion picture apparatus reveals deeply variegated and often conflicting contexts. No single narrative tells the agency's story, despite the governing hegemony of American operations and a clear bureaucratic chain of authority.

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USIA stories are multicultural and multinational, even in the face of a top-down governmental apparatus. To contextualize the pieces within this issue and suggest historiographic frameworks, this section offers a periodization of key moments and trends within the history of USIA's motion picture operations drawn from legal, cultural, and political domains.

Scaffolding the Agency in the Wake of World War II (1945–1953)

Between the end of World War II and the official launch of the independent US Information Agency in 1953, three notable factors came to shape the agency's complex and diversified trajectory throughout the Cold War. First, the legal parameters and discourse surrounding the 1948 Smith–Mundt Act, which established the agency's foundations, frequently served as the grammar for debate concerning USIA's role and identity over the life of the agency. Second, the Marshall Plan and the iterative series of State Department information offices provided testing grounds for a unilateral moving image diplomacy based in documentary campaigns of modernization from which USIA formulated its own bureaucratic structures. Third, within these information offices, a significant multinational administrative and creative labor structure took root that led to fascinating dialectics within later USIA motion pictures,⁶ even though the earlier generation of American officials often conceptualized this multivocality through reductive Orientalist interpretations of culture that claimed the knowledge and authorship of how Others felt and thought.

The experiments with US media systems in embassies and cultural centers during World War II led some lawmakers to immediately call for a continuation and expansion of overseas operations while terminating domestic propaganda. In October 1945, Representative Sol Bloom authored the so-called Bloom Bill, which made the first call for a permanent peacetime information agency.⁷ After some lawmakers questioned the value and ethics of propaganda in a peacetime context, the Bloom Bill died in July 1946. Upon the United States' adoption of a hardline containment policy under the Truman Doctrine in 1947,⁸ advocates of the Bloom Bill had new legs to make another push for an information agency, but they still had to negotiate their constituents' distaste for propaganda. The passage of the Smith–Mundt Act in 1948, with its legal language ambiguously construed, ultimately codified the push-and-pull of this debate throughout the Cold War.

A widespread concern among lawmakers about the Soviets' own vast propaganda systems gave Smith–Mundt the push it needed. A few months earlier, in October 1947, a joint congressional committee reported a series of "successive nightmares" in discovering the "incessant falsification of our country's motives by Communist propagandists" after a visit to OIC⁹ offices in twenty-two European countries.¹⁰ In the face of disinformation and what some members of Congress thought a broader threat to democracy, supporters of the bill devised a moral argument, believing they had to facilitate the spread of liberal, market-based democracy as a "natural state of human affairs."¹¹ This growing momentum eventually led to the passage of the Smith–Mundt Act on January 27, 1948. To mitigate the criticism coming from the bill's opponents, the act worked to protect the interests of private media entities within the US.¹² Interestingly, the original language of Smith–Mundt never made explicit its most referenced component—the domestic distribution ban, which only existed in a

de facto capacity. At the time, access was limited to only “representatives of United States press associations” and members of Congress; academics were added to the list in 1972.¹³

While Congress was debating the scope of the Smith–Mundt Act, the State Department experimented with an iterative set of information offices, which cumulatively set the stage for the independent US Information Agency in 1953. Sensing the oncoming and unprecedented geopolitical landscape and recognizing the inescapably transnational dynamic of media, President Truman rubber-stamped a continuation of the propaganda systems built during the war. Rather than gutting the Office of War Information (OWI), as the country had done with its media infrastructure after WWI, Truman transferred its considerable resources to the State Department via Executive Order 9608. Reflecting the new dynamics of the postwar environment, the State Department broke tradition and hired William Benton, an advertising executive, rather than a journalist.¹⁴ State expanded the extant infrastructure of the US Information Service¹⁵ posts throughout the world, cycling through a convoluted alphabet soup of offices¹⁶ to manage overseas information initiatives between 1945 and 1953. Though each of these offices articulated goals of cultural diplomacy reflective of a peacetime scenario, their growing mandate to directly combat Soviet propaganda—particularly after the congressional committee’s OIC visits in late 1947—reconstituted certain wartime sensibilities within their operations.

The US government's broader involvement in documentary missions overseas was the result of a unilateral and geopolitically motivated use of the documentary format in campaigns of modernization, which diverged from the approach of the United Nations’ Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Dovetailing documentary with foreign policy went beyond UNESCO’s campaign to bring people together and promote the “free flow of ideas.” Governmentalizing documentary diplomacy through the Department of State, in turn, weaponized UNESCO’s initiative as a strategy of Soviet containment. Herbert Edwards, the head of the International Motion Picture Division (IMPD) at the Department of State, justified the use of the documentary format as an alternative to traditional practices of official foreign policy. Working with Edwards, corporate executives of the American film industry formed the Film Advisory Committee in the Department of State and pledged to advise the US government on formulating protocols for the local production of various documentaries outside the United States.

Relative to State Department initiatives, though, the media operations of the Marshall Plan best signify the transition from the one-directional wartime efficiencies of OWI and Signal Corps to the globally expansive binational systems that later defined USIA. The Marshall Plan’s motion picture apparatuses elevated local idioms through skilled multinational labor while navigating the focused, urgent mandates central to the plan. Under the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA) and the subsequent Mutual Security Agency (MSA), the Marshall Plan’s eighteen binational partnerships resulted in two hundred stylistically diverse documentary titles addressing a variety of themes.¹⁷ According to the former deputy chief of its Motion Picture Branch, Albert Hemsing, the ECA-MSA “made full use of [regional] 16 mm film networks” contracted from local filmmakers, several of whom were European “luminaries.” Interestingly, as Hemsing explains, these artists were granted “near total liberty” with less “policy control” than USIA filmmakers later faced.¹⁸ *Handicraft Town* (1949), *The Home We Love* (1950), and *The Hour of Choice* (1951)¹⁹ are among the most notable of the Marshall Plan films, exhibiting distinct filmmaking approaches without forgoing attention to clear policy goals.²⁰ Beyond serving as a blueprint to later USIA operations, all the Marshall Plan titles were absorbed into and circulated within later agency networks until the mid-1970s.^{21 22}

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The transitional period from the implementation of the Marshall Plan to the institutionalization of USIA in 1953—its liminality embodied within Truman's Campaign of Truth—marks a crucial era. Information agencies benefitted from the opportunities of multicultural and multinational local filmmaking operations while also suppressing any chance of two-way diplomacy, instead favoring a neoimperial ideology orientalizing foreigners. The government planners behind film diplomacy conceptualized USIA through secret negotiations with the American movie industry at the levels of policy and style. Through direct conversation with Hollywood heavyweights like Frank Capra, government officials molded its motion picture

operations relative to the American imaginary of Hollywood's role on the world stage. Since World War II, they had learned that moving image diplomacy would have to negotiate the protection of Hollywood's overseas markets with a political impetus to mitigate the impact of Hollywood films they thought might damage America's international brand.

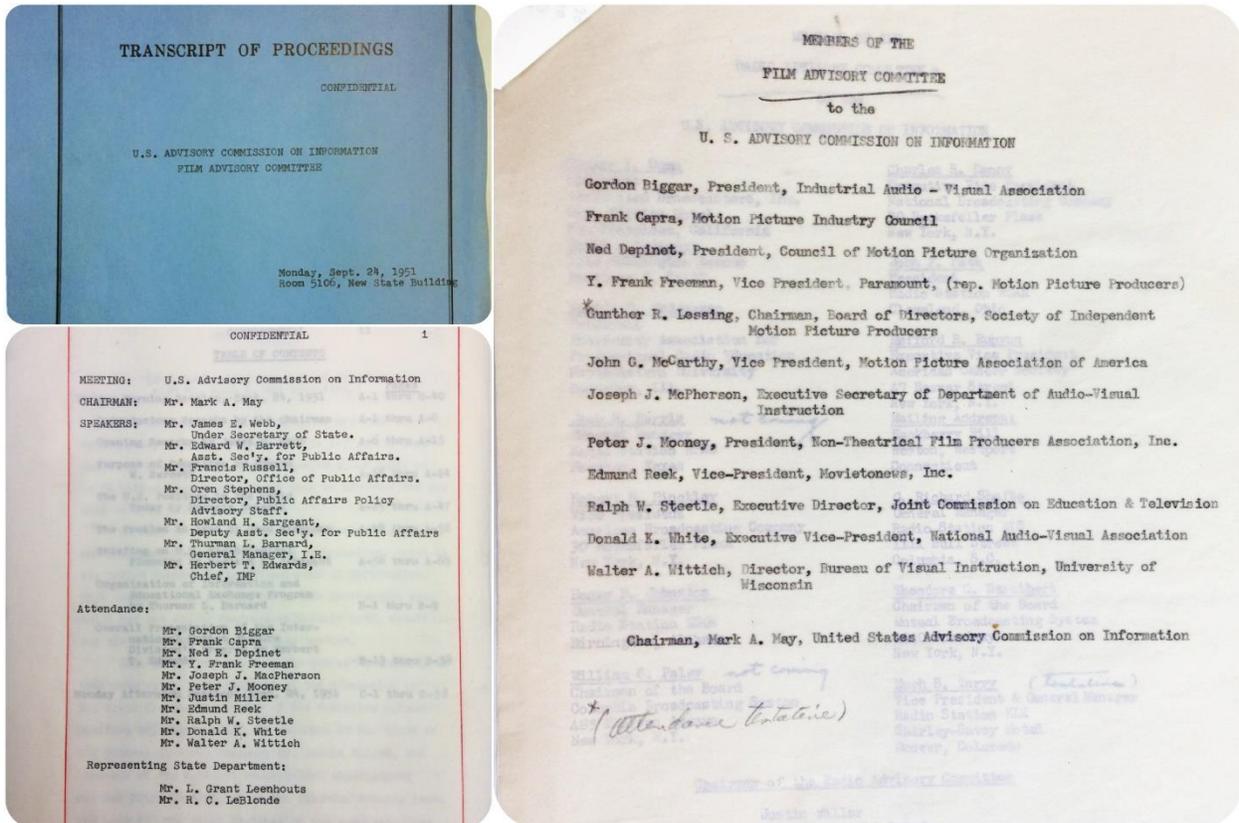


Figure 1: Transcripts of Proceedings, Film Advisory Committee (September 24, 1951), excerpts

Right: List of members of Film Advisory Committee; top left: cover page of transcript; bottom left: meeting attendees [Department of State, Washington, DC, C-32, entry P218, 1948–1958, RG 306: Records of the USIA, 1900–2003, NACP].

Government officials within IMPD met with Hollywood representatives in September 1951 [Figure 1]. Called the Film Advising Committee, their discussions demonstrate the extent to which

they caricatured the local agency of foreign nationals. As the head of IMPD, Herbert Edwards had publicly supported a unilateral governance of the documentary apparatus away from the UNESCO unit in 1947 within a special issue of *Hollywood Quarterly*.²³ Mark May, the chairperson of the Film Advising Committee, who had a record of promoting educational films since the 1930s, also played a key role in convincing the lawmakers to support the Smith–Mundt Act in 1947 by justifying the success of mobile screening campaigns in Europe. Exchanges among these Film Advisory Committee members indicate uncertainties concerning methods of control and influence. The new framework that sponsored film production with foreign nationals felt alien to government officials, leading them to reductively essentialize the identities of non-American participants. Similarly, Margaret Mead’s four-hundred-page “documentary bible” of prescriptive advice and formal analysis, titled the Common Denominator Film Series, suggested methods of designating some agency for foreigners through conceptualizing their cultures while still essentializing them in the process.²⁴ It was too abstract at one end and too formulaic at the other. Put differently, the meeting lacked any actual representation of foreign nationals while planning binational film operations at the highest level. Though Hollywood had a horrible track record in its systemic misrepresentation of Others (deeply informed by its homogeneous production practices), the government officials nevertheless looked to its model while engaging in these new transnational dynamics.

The exchanges within the transcript from the 1951 meeting, worth quoting at length, show how government officials recognized the potential resonance that local voices could have in reaching different audiences. Yet they articulated this potential through a language of codified stereotypes. In hypothesizing how to fund such a local project, namely in the Philippines, Mark May asks the committee:

Does the United States Government . . . get our best money’s worth out of this program by doing it that way by having the picture for the Philippines produced in the Philippines, certain pictures for the Iranians produced in Iran, certain pictures for the Indians produced in India? Is that sound policy from the standpoint of getting the job done?

The conversation accordingly begins to address the question of authorship within such a system, with Edwards responding, “It was written in the Philippines. An American started to write it, we gave it the line and then it was turned over to a Filipino writer, who took that American line and presented it in Filipino terms. . . . The Filipino motion picture company will handle it in the Philippines as one of their own pictures.” Such a duplicitous framework of manufacturing diplomacy, in turn, leads University of Wisconsin film professor Walter Wittich²⁵ to ask how they can ensure “this particular version of life in the Philippines is true . . . and accurate.” Edwards then explains the foundations of a binational bureaucracy that later evolved and expanded within USIA:

In the Philippines . . . we have a Filipino Advisory Committee that is made up of nine very knowledgeable people in the Philippines, and this isn’t upper crust at all. These are people whose lives are dedicated to fighting something. . . . This Filipino Committee advises on everything we do down there, on the posters, the leaflets, the films, everything else. They develop the themes. . . . We own it. We finance it.

Relative to a scenario in which Americans only tell the world about a “better-off” America, which the committee argues is “natural [to] . . . resent” and can often “boomerang against you,” they arrive at a consensus believing this “Filipino picture” offers an authenticity because it is a “message from a Filipino to his people.”²⁶

By 1953 Edwards more confidently justified how foreign nationals’ cultural “idioms” could be

situated relative to the American ideological and aesthetic imaginary. During a congressional hearing focused on the “Overseas Information Programs of the United States,” Senator Fulbright asks Edwards about the nature of foreign nationals’ authorship of the films. Edwards responds, “The ones that are produced abroad are invariably produced by local private concerns, so that the finished product will be completely in the visual idiom of the country. . . . These people have been able to see themselves on the screen.”²⁷ Although ideologically supportive of the hegemony of liberal market capitalism, the othering of the multinational labor and joint authorship took form at the highest level of planning. Nevertheless, vast and radical multiplicity within these bureaucratic operations effectively led to examples of genuine and subversive cinematic diplomacy through which filmmaking practices incorporated the dialectical perspectives of local voices. The weaponizing USIA experiment, therefore, diverged from earlier colonial filmmaking as the agency incorporated a multitude of lenses, which led to a somewhat plural and complicated history for its motion picture operations during the Cold War.

Paradigmatic Motion Pictures and Local Iterations from the Early Cold War

A 1951 SCAP-CIE²⁸ film titled *New Eyes, New Ears*, which was jointly produced by the United States and Japan, illustrates in great detail the process behind these binational motion picture operations. The film uses the idea of “process” to signify motion pictures’ value and credibility to facilitate open dialogue within their target contexts.²⁹ For one, the documentary offers a granular, step-by-step narration of a film’s planning, production, circulation, and exhibition protocols in a similar binational system that USIA later employed. Yet it also represents and romanticizes the emergent philosophy undergirding US moving image diplomacy, in which an outwardly dialogic, binational motion picture system supposedly allows cultural “gap[s] to be bridged” by expanding the viewer’s “circle of experience.” Although the film foregrounds Japanese citizens’ reception of American cultural/educational content, it ultimately claims the American governing brand of communication as a universalized commonsense.

New Eyes, New Ears starts with a voiceover guiding the viewer through a montage showing a Japanese child growing to adulthood, with a continually expanding circle serving as a visual metaphor for how he experiences the world. Yet as an adult, this ring becomes static and remains isolated in his specific corner of the nation. The isolation, as the film implies, is overcome through American motion picture diplomacy. An infographic map illustrates how regional audiovisual centers distribute films throughout Japan, which serves to reactivate the man’s (and other people’s) growing sphere of experience. The film compellingly expresses this process within its conclusion, using live-action scenes to show the actual physical transit of the films to various locations. A montage of fluid-dissolve transitions shows how people transport boxes of films through varying landscapes to their destinations, moving by bus, sled, ox-drawn carriage, backpacks on mountainous roads, big and small boats, and, finally, small vans [Figure 2]. Close-ups of the attentive faces of Japanese audiences blend into a wider tracking shot of larger audiences. The voiceover returns, claiming, “Audiovisual materials are giving new eyes and new ears to the people of Japan to help them become informed citizens of the world community.” In its story of motion picture production, distribution, and exhibition in Japan, the film showcases a neoimperial framework of communication within radically localized apparatuses—a tension inherent to the binational structures on which USIA would come to rely over the coming decades.



Figure 2: New Eyes, New Ears (1951), selected images

Shots showing the storing and transporting film reels across Japan. [NARA 306.2885]

If *New Eyes, New Ears* presupposed the idiomatic and procedural complexity of USIA's institutional structures, *Earthquake Village* (1963)³⁰ shows how these paradoxes central to the foundational debates in 1951 continued to imbue later agency films and incorporate elements of local authorship. A documentary sponsored by USIS Iran, *Earthquake Village* showcases Hassan, a village boy in Iran who was orphaned after losing his entire family in the devastating earthquake of 1962. In the aftermath of the disaster, Hassan befriends “the tall American,” an expert advisor who uses the boy’s help while introducing techniques for modernizing Iran [Figure 3]. Their parting scene is filled with emotion and a poetry that strategically advocates binational friendship as a condition of humanity. The tall American offers Hassan a young goat, and Hassan offers his flute in return. The deep and soothing music of the flute fills the nondiegetic space while the “US AID” sign on the van mediates the space between the adult American and the Iranian kid. The concluding voiceover dramatically proclaims:

The Iranian poet Saadi wrote the moral of this story hundreds of years ago. The sons of Adam are members of one another, for in their creation they have common origin. If the vicissitudes of fortune involve one member in pain, all the other members will be of sympathy. Thou who are indifferent to other men’s affliction, if they call thee a man, art unworthy of the name.

The film parlays the profound tragedy of an earthquake, which translates across every culture, into a promodernization, technocratic message through a distinctly Iranian idiom. A curious entanglement of different ideological, cultural, and aesthetic elements, *Earthquake Village* exemplifies the juxtapositions that defined many of USIA's transnational motion pictures.



Figure 3: Earthquake Village (1963), selected images

In this scene, an Iranian boy, Hassan, who has lost his parents in the 1962 earthquake, follows the “Tall American”

and helps him rebuild the destroyed villages. According to Ali Issari, the film was commissioned and funded by USIS Iran and USAID. It was shown to the Congressional Committee in charge of an aid program for Iran in 1963 as evidence to help lawmakers with decision-making. [Film courtesy of Ali Issari; Ali Issari and Doris Paul, *A Picture of Persia* (Exposition Press, 1977); Interview with Ali Issari by Hadi Gharabaghi, March 31, 2007.]

The lawmakers' debate over the principles that shaped the Smith-Mundt Act—continuously weighing the mandates to combat disinformation, “educate,” and manifest American ideology across geopolitical and cultural contexts—never subsided over the life of the Cold War and powerfully shaped the agency's motion picture output. However, these titles also reflect a multitude of variables within the complicated ecosystem in which they were produced, distributed, and seen. Beyond this dynamic surrounding the agency's core mission, we can read the ethos of a given presidential administration, local regional idioms, and contemporaneous moving image cultures into the agency's roughly twenty thousand titles. In this sense, although supportive of liberal capitalism, the USIA corpus resists any singular ideological, methodological, or aesthetic lens through which to read the motion pictures, as they were uniquely subject to their different—and sometimes competing—cultural and political contexts.

The official formation of USIA as an independent agency in 1953, backed with increased funding and more robust audiovisual infrastructure, in essence gave it leverage to expand its motion picture operations across multiple localities. Despite the opportunities of this expansion, many of the more widely distributed titles myopically mirrored Eisenhower's militaristic sensibilities, prioritizing efficiency and quantifiable results in the exercise of soft power.³¹ Fittingly, the president appointed Theodore Streibert as its first director, a former assistant dean of Harvard Business School and broadcasting executive with extensive experience advising government information outlets.³² J. Cheever Cowdin, a former chairman of Universal Pictures recommended by Cecil B. DeMille, served as the agency's first acting director of the motion picture division, with Andrew W. Smith Jr. taking over the role before the end of 1953.³³ Although some scholars have perhaps overstated the didacticism of the motion pictures during this period, many titles indeed operate as cogs in the machine of worldwide campaigns or as quickly mobilized tools by which to dictate the US response to hot conflicts. On one end, USIA developed several films to supplement Eisenhower's massive Atoms for Peace campaign, which sought to highlight the clean energy potential of nuclear fission and mitigate the sweeping anxiety that came with America's usage of atomic bombs. For example, an episode of USIS Iran—sponsored *Akhhbār-e Iran* [Iran News]—locally produced in Persian—films the official ceremony celebrating the sharing and export of nuclear research and technology to Iran in the 1950s.³⁴ On the other end, the agency circulated a host of titles in response to the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, which leveraged the conflict to create an exploitable aura of war while avoiding any actual involvement in it.³⁵

By the end of Eisenhower's presidency, USIA was no longer in lockstep with the dynamics of the changing world. Many of the agency's employees and artists believed its media did not speak meaningfully to the emergent postcolonial landscape and increasingly connected world.³⁶ Their tune quickly changed, however, upon the election of John F. Kennedy, the establishment of his New Frontier policy, and his appointment of the seasoned journalist Edward R. Murrow as the agency's director. In the spirit of what became known as Kennedy's Court of Camelot,³⁷

USIA found new means to recruit young and visionary talent. George Stevens Jr., the son of the famous Hollywood director, whom Murrow selected as the head of the motion picture division in November 1961, was one such hire. After Stevens took over the agency's motion pictures and hired a slew of talented US-based filmmakers, USIA became entwined with the new milieu of university film programs, American documentary culture, and the wider Hollywood ecosystem.³⁸ Stevens capitalized on his connections and searched film festival and television communities to find standout work, inviting skilled filmmakers like William Greaves, James Blue, and Charles Guggenheim to the agency. He would also put out open calls in trade journals and recruited some of the most gifted students from film schools in Southern California, such as Kent Mackenzie, Erik Daarstad, and Carroll Ballard.³⁹ Some of the films from this period are among the most well-known within the USIA corpus, like *Nine from Little Rock* (1964), *A Skill for Molina* (1964), *The Five Cities of June* (1963), and *Years of Lightning, Day of Drums* (1964), which was among the few agency films to circulate domestically during the Cold War [Figures 5 and 6].

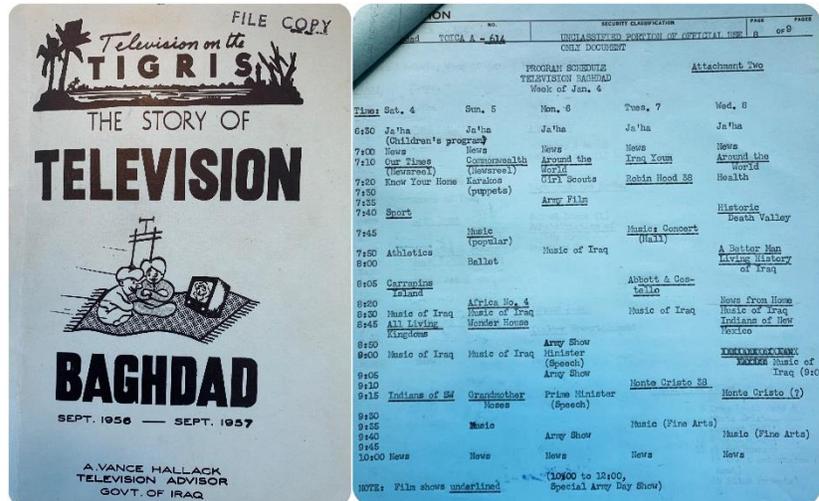


Figure 4: Television Baghdad booklet cover and example of daily schedule (1957)

The USIA invested in television as early as the 1950s. In one such case, the United States Operations Mission (USOM) and USIA sponsored the first television station in Iraq under the management of television advisor, A. Vance Hallack. [Declassified NND 927716]

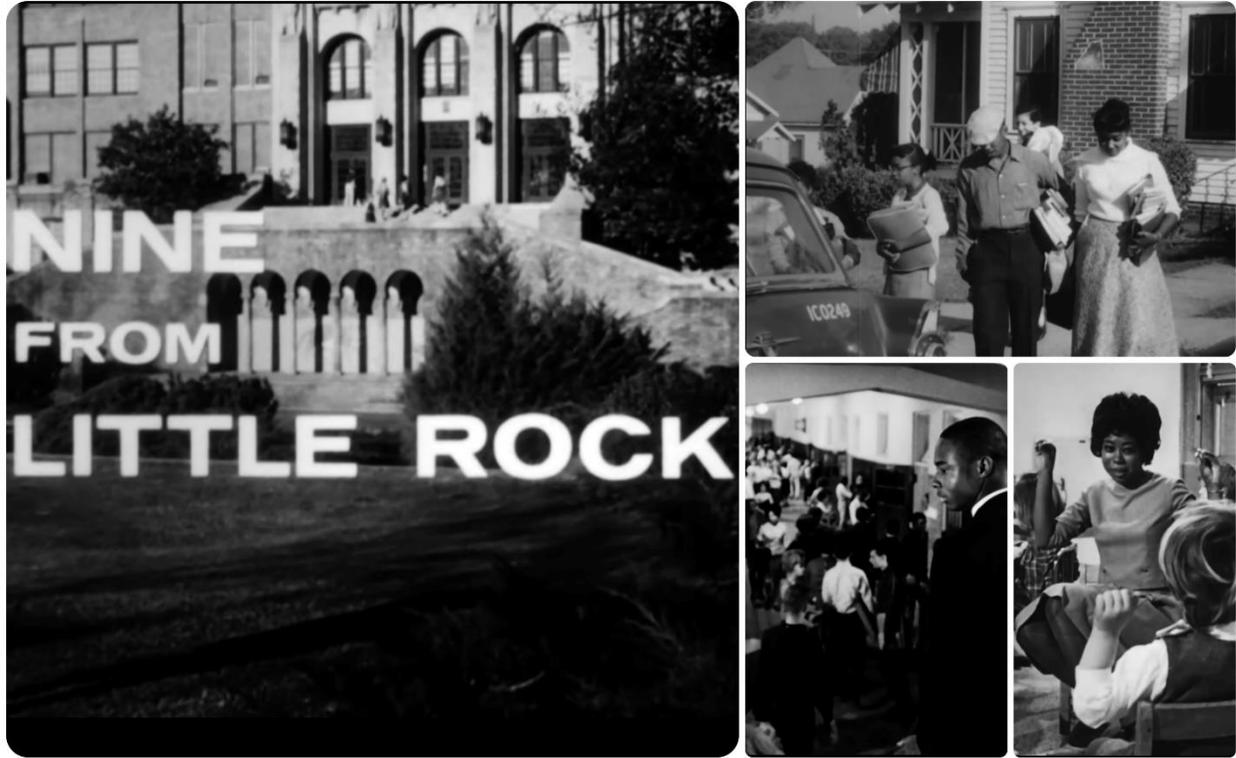


Figure 5: Nine from Little Rock (1964), selected images.

Director, Charles Guggenheim. Winner of the 1965 Academy Award for Best Documentary Short, the documentary is among the agency's most well-known, exemplary, and important films. Yet it is part of a larger story concerning USIA. While the agency's institutional motivations were certainly complicated amidst (rightful) global criticisms of embedded prejudices in the United States, many USIA films feature stories of American civil rights movements and historically marginalized communities. [NARA 306.5160]



Figure 6: Years of Lightning, Day of Drums (1964), poster for Japan

Director, Bruce Herschensohn. [film, NARA 306.9015] [poster, NARA 306-ppb-339-2012-001-pr]

During the first decade of the agency, Eisenhower and Kennedy left clear fingerprints on much of the filmic output. In the following decade, however, the motion pictures were less subject to the style of a given president and more a function of the totalizing war in Vietnam. Although USIA and its subsidiary USIS posts throughout the world continued their operations as they had in previous years, the sheer gravitational pull of the war drained the agency of much of its creative, monetary, and labor capital.⁴⁰ In terms of its motion pictures, Stevens's ambition and management style remained visible in the agency's filmic output through his departure in 1965, even amid the machinery of the Vietnam War. Within certain USIS-supported titles primarily made by South Vietnamese filmmakers, we see nuance, artistry, and even moral ambivalence speaking to their experience with the war. In these films, the perspectives of the local filmmakers could take precedence over US policy goals, even if the two were at odds with one another. For example, films such as *Sons of Hai Ba Trung* (1962) and *The Rag Doll* (1965)⁴¹ employ Vietnamese idioms and mythologies to make sense of the prolonged war the nation faced, evoking an elegiac tone and a complex visual aesthetic.

While the paper trail attached to the production and distribution of *The Rag Doll* illuminates bureaucratic and political tensions between US and Vietnamese filmmaking operations,⁴² *Sons of Hai Ba Trung* provides a productive example through which to read binational dynamics into the aesthetic of a given film. Directed by Duong Quy Binh, this colorful 35mm documentary exhibits qualities reflective of both the emerging agency aesthetic under George Stevens Jr. and stylistic idioms scholars associate with Vietnamese cinema.⁴³ The film draws from Vietnamese mythology to allegorize South Vietnam's struggle with the North, drawing connections between the Trung sisters' heroic resistance to the Chinese invasion in 40 CE to the conflict the South faced. Many of the sequences in *Sons of Hai Ba Trung* reveal the fingerprints of USIA and the American imaginary of Vietnam, moving between sweeping pastoral shots, montages of military preparedness, and scenes of graphic simulated violence upon people of the South—making the film ultimately prowar. However, the documentary renders a complicated, almost paradoxical visual expression of homeland defense. Instead of framing victory as likely and death as something to avoid, the allusions to familiar mythology cosmically situate the South's resistance as a tragic duty that spans the long history of their nation. But the nation is split, and this lament is rendered ambivalently in the film's representation of the land itself. The documentary's pastoral images go beyond the Western image of a threatened Eden—a conceit on which USIA relied throughout much of its history. The lush shots of dense jungles, wide seas, sandy beaches, and open fields signify something sacred to protect that is essential to their plans for defense. Yet these natural terrains also present a terrifying, defamiliarized wilderness within which the Northern guerrillas may hide [Figure 7].



Figure 7: Sons of Hai Ba Trung (1962), selected images.

Director, Duong Quy Binh [NARA 306.4973].

In the eyes of USIA, the film's engagements with homeland defense myths were intended to make the message of the documentaries more legible to the Vietnamese, giving opportunity to reflect on the complexities of their relationship to their civil war. It wears the horror of war on its sleeve, and the perpetuity of the struggle makes their resistance transcendent, connecting generations. In a 1969 interview with *Film Comment*, William Bayer speaks to the supposed popularity and effectiveness of this approach. "The South Vietnamese government," he says, "wanted to do one of their great historical myths or stories on film" to formulate a "parable of modern events." Though he does not recall its title in the interview, he clearly alludes to *Sons of Hai Ba Trung*, calling the sisters "kind of double Joan of Arcs who led a rebellion against the Chinese." These myths, he argues, offered a familiar grammar for citizens in urban and rural areas alike. "If there was one thing the South Vietnamese had going for them," he adds, "it was this ingrained cultural thing that all children of South Vietnam just fed upon—the hatred of the Chinese, the memory of the Chinese invasion, and the Vietnamese heroes who may have been defeated but who rebelled."⁴⁴ However, Bayer disregards the film's tonal undercurrents—the weight of the conflict that Southern soldiers (and the Vietnamese filmmakers) bear after decades of brutal colonialism turned their nation against itself.

As the war grew more violent and USIA started overseeing the wartime conglomerate alongside the military, the Joint US Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO), the agency began to dismiss these approaches to filmmaking and even the films themselves, barring their distribution in some instances. The motion pictures were increasingly bottlenecked into destructive black-and-white sensibilities of total war, moving away from a more dialogic and filmmaker-first approach. The USIA motion picture apparatus did not adapt as it might have done in the previous decade, planting its feet in the ground to defend a naïve and Manichean vision of the ongoing conflict, even while US and international opinion quickly soured on the war. More than any other title, *Vietnam, Vietnam!* (1971), the most expensive film the agency had ever produced at that point, exemplifies this position. Framing the United States' continued involvement as a moral obligation to the South Vietnamese and negatively portraying protesters, the film's nakedly hardline rhetoric even led several USIS posts to refuse to show it.⁴⁵

In the twilight of the Vietnam War, the budget, influence, and output of USIA and its motion picture divisions greatly diminished. Whereas the director in the agency's first fifteen years had often played a key role in shaping foreign policy, contributing through a seat on the National Security Council, the agency now seemed a relic of the early Cold War. Back in the United States, the public criticized USIA's role in the war and began to more directly question the need for a propaganda office, which led to a thorough external review.⁴⁶ Those working for the agency recognized the

urgency of adopting a more progressive approach⁴⁷ that embraced new styles and technologies within its media. To both symbolic and practical effects, the agency's reshuffling⁴⁸ and rebranding into the US International Communication Agency (USICA) facilitated these changes. Almost immediately after his election, President Carter outspokenly supported these developments, elevating the agency's "reverse" or "second mandate," which had "two distinct but related goals": to not only "tell the world about our society and policy . . . [but] also tell ourselves about the world, so as to enrich our own culture" and aid "the understanding . . . [of] problems among nations."⁴⁹ One manifestation of this second mandate took shape in the agency's investment in innovative satellite television technology, planting the seeds for a more dialogic and multinational programming focused on interviews and conversations rather than a more unidirectional narration of official American interests. The agency had even begun to experiment with the new delivery system right before Carter took office, giving him a base from which to further the investment. In the summer of 1976, USIA broadcast *Salute by Satellite* simultaneously throughout the world to celebrate the United States' bicentennial.⁵⁰ Beyond the novel technology, the bicentennial gave the agency occasion to revisit some of Stevens's tactics, providing grants to young and visionary filmmakers and resulting in some of the agency's most memorable titles.⁵¹ In addition to new terrain in aesthetics, more films and programs under Carter foregrounded voices and topics emerging from contemporary civil rights movements, hiring a more diverse workforce and even exhibiting a willingness to critique embedded elements of American society that justly warranted the movements.⁵²

As much as USIA engineered bureaucratic levees to maintain some level of institutional stability, its operations and media were nevertheless subject to the equal and opposite reactions often found in American politics and culture. In the eyes of some politicians and public figures, the changes that eventually manifested in USICA, while well intentioned, suffocated the potential of a global information agency, rendering it unnecessary, particularly amid the rise of international news conglomerates. Even former USIA filmmaker and head of the motion picture division Bruce Herschensohn publicly criticized the direction of the agency, claiming "creativity . . . dies a quick death" in "rooms that house conference tables."⁵³

Ronald Reagan and his longtime friend Charles Wick, whom he appointed as director of the agency, not only sought to reinvigorate USIA,⁵⁴ they used the agency in efforts to amplify the Cold War and rhetorically replicate the good-vs.-evil urgency of American culture in the 1950s. While USIA continued to utilize its developing satellite technology in a similar capacity to Carter's USICA through "dialogues" and Worldnet, Wick exploited its reach to enact campaigns similar to the Atoms for Peace initiative and systematically mobilize hardline responses to conflict as Eisenhower did with Hungary. One prominent example is the globally broadcast program ostensibly made in support of the Polish Solidarity movement, *Let Poland Be Poland* (1982). Displacing *Vietnam, Vietnam!* as the agency's most expensive production,⁵⁵ the telethon-like show featured twenty-three world leaders, a slew of American celebrities, and Polish artists and activists. More than anything, though, it was a proof of concept of how programming broadcast globally through satellite could signify hegemony, as the show and the technology that enabled it aimed to corral world opinion rather than facilitate meaningful, plural discourse.

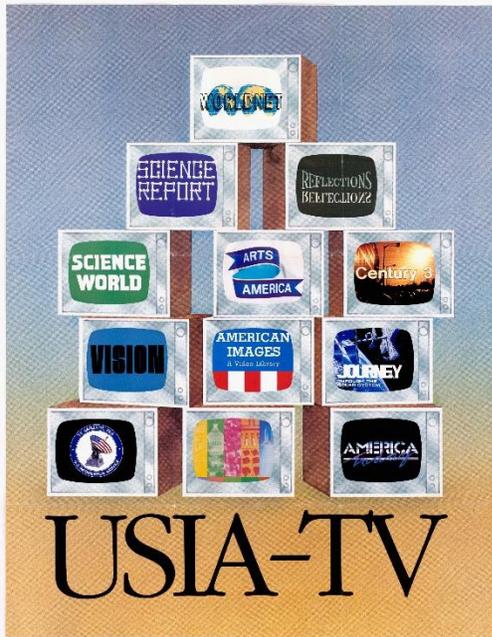


Figure 8: Advertisement for USIA Worldnet programming
 [NARA 306-par-8-13]

As the news media landscape of the 1980s changed and fragmented, USIA worked to stay ahead in international markets by further investing in satellite technology and programming while also creating new ways by which to disseminate its audiovisual materials. These efforts dovetailed with Wick’s salesman style of directorship as he proactively branded the agency’s new channel, Worldnet, broadcast (primarily) via satellite. Evolving from a particular type of show in which US public figures could be interviewed in real time,⁵⁶ Wick extrapolated the name onto a full channel, which featured shows like *America Today*, *CINE Showcase*, *Science Today*, and *English: American Style* [Figure 8]. Beyond Worldnet, USIA developed methods by which to capture and circulate its media, often in an unattributed manner, which opened a backdoor for their images to be shown by US news outlets. One prominent example came through the Afghan Media Resource Center (AMRC),⁵⁷ which echoed many of the USIA audiovisual training initiatives from the early years of the Cold War.⁵⁸ USIA launched the AMRC in 1985, six years into the Soviet-Afghan War, contracting some Boston University professors to train local *mujahideen*⁵⁹

in videography, among other skills. Sent out into every corner of Afghanistan, these local filmmakers captured fragments—moments of everyday life or shards of live scenes of war. This footage would be lightly edited, packaged, and sold by USIA to television networks around the world, not only allowing for the circulation of unattributed media but also making invisible the authorship of the mujahideen who risked their lives to gather the footage.

Waning and Adapting after the Cold War (1989–Today)

While the Cold War remained active, USIA could justify its participation in the increasingly competitive media landscape and earn congressional funding to back its efforts. However, as the conflict faded in the 1990s and other US media outlets achieved a similarly global reach, it became harder for the agency to convince Congress to provide money and resources. Worldnet proved to not be as popular as Wick had advertised,⁶⁰ and countries became less inclined to host USIA materials as alternative cable and satellite programming became available.

The one wing of USIA that remained popular, however, was Voice of America, which maintained a relatively strong reputation of journalistic integrity and continued to produce content “in-language,” unlike the other major news outlets. As USIA shut its doors and dissolved into the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) in 1999, VOA served as the constant during this transition and even began to take up the mantle of the USIA’s former motion picture divisions. As Peter Vaselopulos discusses in this issue, VOA was among the early adopters of an online news website, starting voanews.com in 1999. In addition to hosting radio stations, VOA also produces and circulates audiovisual footage captured by an international team of employees.

"Voice of America has become the key space in which new iterations of USIA engage with and produce national and diasporic visual culture. VOA started exclusive audiovisual programming in different languages in 1994. By 2014 twenty-five stations offered video programming online in different languages."

To this day, VOA (now managed under the US Agency for Global Media) still has a very international presence and gathers stories and perspectives in which other private outlets choose not to invest. Following the Smith–Mundt Modernization Act of 2012, which opened agency material for domestic distribution, VOA footage often circulates beyond its platforms, continuing to leave a mark on transnational discourse and people’s perceptions of the United States and world events.

Indeed, VOA has become the key space in which new iterations of USIA engage with and produce national and diasporic visual culture. VOA started exclusive audiovisual programming in different languages in 1994. By 2014 twenty-five stations offered video programming online in different languages. One prominent and exemplary case can be found in the Persian division (VOA-PNN), which steadily grew in size in the early 2000s, offering seven hours of daily programs for television and online programming by 2007. It also sponsored two satirical news shows, *Parazit* (Static; 2008–2012) and *OnTen* (Antenna; 2012–2015). Following in the footsteps of Jon Stewart’s *The Daily Show*, *Parazit* emerged through a journalistic collaboration between Kambiz Hosseini and Saman Arbabi in response to the disputed presidential election of 2009 in Iran. *Parazit*⁶¹ was an unusual experiment relative to the VOA’s typically serious tone, offering a creative and powerful critique of police brutality in the Islamic Republic of Iran. At the peak of its popularity, *Parazit* acquired a sizable following in both Iran and the diaspora, which was also unusual for VOA programming.⁶² The satirical news show took on a life of its own through VOA’s YouTube channel and garnered a lot of attention among Iranians worldwide as well as many mainstream news media inside the US.

The contemporary example of VOA-PNN illustrates both a continuity in the legacy of USIA moving images and the current fragmentation of the larger USAGM ecosystem. In this sense, the study of USIA motion pictures not only enables more granular historical insights within Cold War narratives residually shaped by the period’s bipolar power structures, it can also instantiate methodologies by which to navigate our present transnational, market-based, and increasingly chaotic media landscape. Though USAGM ostensibly adopted a similar top-down model to USIA upon its reorganization in 2018,⁶³ the focus and consolidation that were meant to bring efficiency were recently hijacked by starkly partisan interests. In his brief stint as USAGM director, filmmaker Michael Pack managed the agency in a manner that blatantly prioritized the self-interests of an administration.⁶⁴ Amid the threat of the agency becoming a direct and expansive propaganda device of the executive, USAGM and many of its career employees—especially through its traditionally respected VOA brand and its corresponding apparatuses—still produce audiovisual content that

carves out spaces distinct from social media and corporate news. In addition to radio and web content, VOA produces several television programs and broadcasts live television, giving particular focus to Africa with shows like *Africa 54* and *Our Voices*. If these shows maintain VOA's tradition of more dialogic content and relatively credible news,⁶⁵ other programming exemplifies the extant mark of Reagan and Wick's USIA. Business-focused shows like *StartUp Africa* and VOA's vast multimedia infrastructure to teach English are emblematic of wider US foreign policy efforts at work within today's prevalent grammar of global capitalism.

Though the history of USIA moving images is deep and mostly unexplored, our continued research of the domain may shape how we navigate and engage the increasingly complex state of our media landscape and the USAGM's role within it. More troublingly, recent geopolitical events have reconstituted supposedly archaic Cold War bipolarities, imbuing this research with real and present stakes. In the weeks before the publication of this special issue, the world witnessed the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, leading to another refugee crisis after the horrific events during the United States' removal of troops from Afghanistan in August 2021. The messy package of news-media and user-uploaded images coming from these tragic circumstances—mixed with spectacle, fakery, and raw humanity—is both frighteningly new and old. The images remind us of the profound and lasting violence of the Cold War and hearken back to the ways the world responded to the widely-circulated footage of conflicts like the Hungarian Uprising of 1956, the U.S. war in Vietnam, and the 1968 Prague Spring. The history of USIA's hyper-awareness of atrocities caused by the Soviets, however, reads in sharp contrast to the agency's muted reactions to similar atrocities committed by the American government, especially the half a century of CIA meddling in regime change across three continents. As we continue to unpack the role USIA played in the coverage and memory of such conflicts, we hope our historical research may inform the work of those proactively seeking to unpack the chaos of our present moment.

Methods and Theories for Navigating USIA Motion Pictures

The heterogeneity of USIA motion pictures, which operated within incredibly diverse production and reception contexts, necessitates a variety of methodological and theoretical lenses spanning and connecting several disciplines. Rather than exhaustively exploring each potential approach to the archive here, we suggest three relatively novel and apt frameworks by which to navigate the collection.

"Moving Image Diplomacy"

USIA's film operation is recognized under the rubrics of propaganda, public diplomacy, and cultural diplomacy. Given the genealogical legacies of each concept and their entanglement with histories of the Cold War, we find the framework of moving image diplomacy as an apt lens through which to investigate the film and media of the USIA/USIS archives. While the concept of diplomacy addresses the governmental and institutional dimension of research, a focus on moving image media carves out a position of scholarly distance that remains in dialogue with historical emergence and reconfigurations of the aforementioned practices without owing ideological allegiance [Figure 9]. This

"The study of the USIA collection demonstrates how aspects of bureaucracy are fundamental to the production of film culture as experienced within and across national borders and as civic discourse among various publics within national and international civil societies."

approach, in turn, allows researchers to conveniently draw from a range of existing theoretical and methodological approaches salient to film and media scholarship.⁶⁶

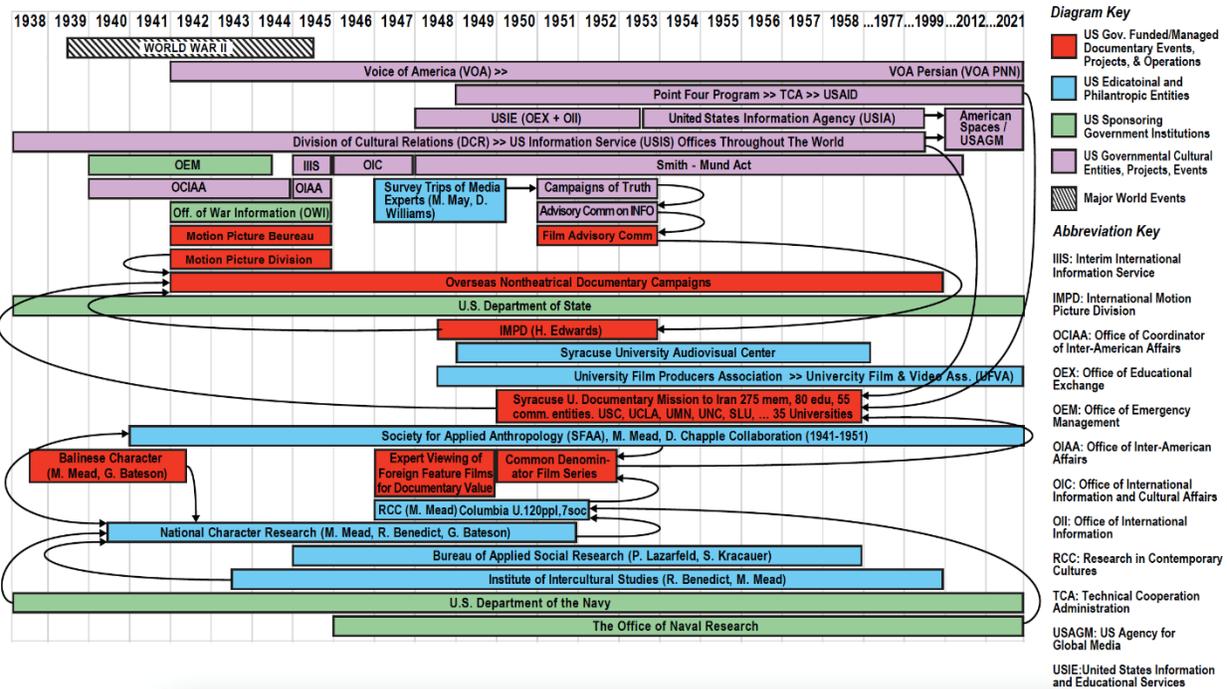


Figure 9: Diagram of the formation of documentary diplomacy in the United States
[Design by Anya Keyser]

USIA research also challenges a methodological tradition within film and media research—and perhaps humanities research, more broadly—that renders governmental and bureaucratic processes invisible in the production of knowledge. Even though the films operated ideologically as propaganda, the study of the USIA collection demonstrates how aspects of bureaucracy are fundamental to the production of film culture as experienced within and across national borders and as civic discourse among various publics within national and international civil societies [Figure 10]. In this sense, Foucault’s concept of “governmentality” can provide a productive means by which to address the USIA domain, expanding upon the idea of how governmental planning aspires to encourage and manage moving image cultures diplomatically through invitational packages. However, Foucault himself never researched messy bureaucratic rationalities such as USIA’s within unfamiliar cultural and national contexts. Governmentality, therefore, leaves open the possibility of investigating the complexity of power relations, giving particular attention to the nuances of the binational bureaucracies that underscored Cold War paradigms of global capitalist citizenship.⁶⁷

OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION - MOTION PICTURE BUREAU						
GENERAL INFORMATION		MONTH OF	1945		COUNTRY	
M 1		SEPTEMBER		PALESTINE		
DATE	TITLE	NUMBER OF SHOWINGS THIS MONTH	TOTAL SHOWINGS TO DATE SINCE 1/1/45	ATTENDANCE THIS MONTH	TOTAL ATTENDANCE FROM RELEASE DATE SINCE 1/1/45	REPORT PRINT REPLACEMENTS REQUIRED
8/5/45	Pending in Walls Walls	1	20	100	3336	
2/11/45	Teen Age Farm Hand	4	14	720	1996	
9/12/45	Yankee	2	18	470	3479	
8/21/45	Sky Trooper	5	23	115	1153	
8/21/45	Vanishing Private	2	17	200	2082	
8/23/45	Defense against Terrorism	3	8	445	1250	
2/22/45	Valley of the Tennessee	4	29	805	6436	
8/5/44	People of the Ozarks	1	4	80	897	
1/21/45	Fall Out, Fall In	9	20	1220	2836	
1/22/45	Private Pluto	1	10	80	1886	
7/9/45	Marines at Tarawa	1	4	80	329	
1/23/45	Trees to Turn the Wind	1	3	350	700	
1/25/45	Old Army Game	1	8	370	1143	
1/16/45	Man's Greatest Friend	1	8	300	1810	
1/23/45	National Gallery of Art	1	4	75	1088	
1/21/45	Donald Gets Deafened	4	10	315	1147	
1/23/45	Fury in the Pacific	1	3	45	445	
1/23/45	Towhead	3	24	620	4493	
2/1/45	Army Mascot	2	13	320	1420	
1/23/45	Apache Infantry	2	15	320	2849	
7/7/45	Boys' Life	2	7	320	1433	
1/23/45	Water, Friend or Enemy	1	3	60	450	
1/23/45	Navy Cheerleaders	3	9	60	1853	
1/1/45	Mildred Dilling	1	7	100	435	
8/3/45	Sid Flight	1	10	100	1498	

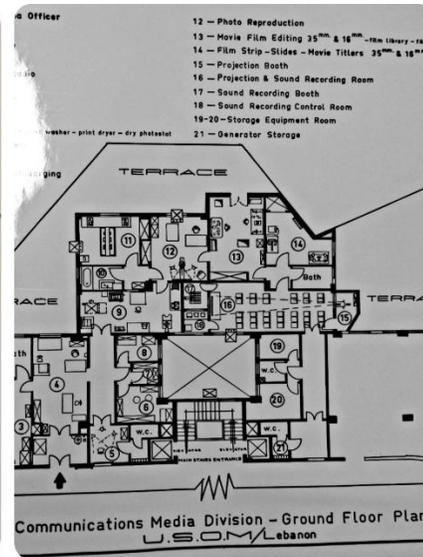


Figure 10: Traces of moving image infrastructure and diplomacy from early Cold War
 Left: non-theatrical screenings in Palestine, 1945 (NND 66479); Right: floor plan of USOM Communication Media Division in Lebanon (NND 978509)

Reading Hollywood into USIA

Although USIA motion pictures functioned in distinct ways and places relative to popular cinema, the agency's complicated relationship to Hollywood throughout the Cold War may still provide scholars a generative historical and methodological baseline. In the course of its operations, USIA addressed the hegemony of popular Hollywood cinema by spinning discourses that mythologized, supplemented, and even "corrected" its international imprint, while continuously supporting the political economy of its distribution.

On the one hand, the agency's motion pictures fundamentally justified its existence as a vessel to project a less sensationalized and more honest image of America relative to Hollywood films.⁶⁸ On the other hand, it often relied on big names from Hollywood to advise its officials, refine its operations, or make films for the agency, while also relying on Hollywood's permission to curate and circulate select popular cinema to targeted areas [Figure 11].⁶⁹

However, the exchanges between Hollywood and USIA were not exclusively oppositional or unidirectional. During the 1960s, for example, the agency became a breeding ground for young talent. Some scholars have spoken to the agency's connections to American documentary and independent filmmaking cultures,⁷⁰ yet it also provided platforms for people who later became

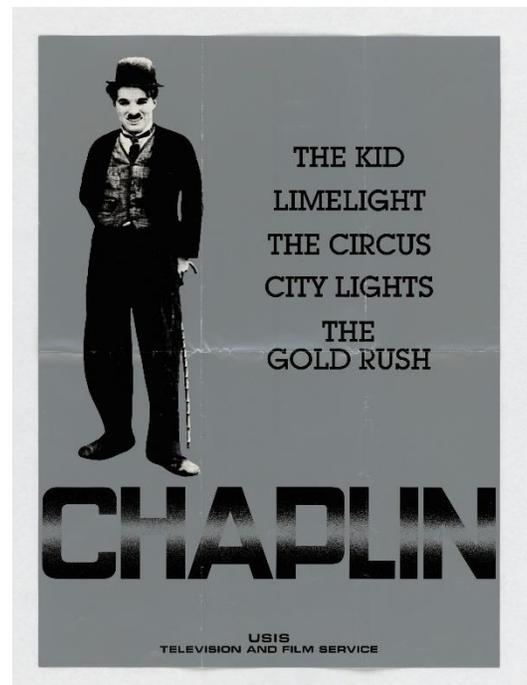


Figure 11: USIS advertisement for screenings of Charlie Chaplin films
 With the rise of video in the 1980s, Hollywood films became a useful means of outreach for USIS posts. Although contemporary films were popular, the "classics"--such as the films of Chaplin--were often the most sought out. See Alvin Snyder, *Warriors of Disinformation*, 147. [NARA 306-par-7-06]

notable figures in Hollywood, such as Verna Fields, who mentored names like George Lucas, Marcia Lucas, and Robert Dalva⁷¹ via work at USIA.⁷² Other institutions of American cinema can also trace their pedigree back to USIA. One of the founding editors of *Film Comment*, Gordon Hitchens, directed six films for USIA and made efforts to integrate other agency voices, such as those of James Blue and William Bayer.⁷³ And as one of our issue's authors, Brian Real, has shown, the seeds of George Stevens Jr.'s vision for the American Film Institute, though unrealized through the agency, were planted during his time as head of the USIA motion picture division.⁷⁴

USIA's connections to Hollywood, of course, warrant scholarly interest in a historical capacity through novel opportunities to map out genealogies important to each respective institution. Yet we also suggest the vast body of research on Hollywood production and culture may offer constructive frameworks by which to interrogate USIA moving images. Through what is perhaps the most visible of research domains in our field—works on classic Hollywood cinema, which is concretely theorized nearly to the point of common sense—we can bring light to this incredibly invisible corpus. Though the studio system's relatively closed and vertically integrated system is not a perfect analog for USIA's sprawling multinational and diffuse bureaucratic architecture of logistics and practices,⁷⁵ we may be able to transpose elements of the methodology of the scholarship of classic Hollywood onto our reading of USIA moving images. This theoretical corpus correlates the signature of a studio to its films' aesthetics and cultures. We can similarly understand USIA's filmic output as a product of the negotiated interests of given administrations, leadership, and regional operations. The classic Hollywood methodology's attention to the full breadth of the system can provide a model for deeper inquiry into wider notions of labor, moving image technologies, and noteworthy tensions between local filmmakers and the transnational bureaucracy in which they worked. In this sense, more recent scholarship on the "runaway Hollywood" of the midtwentieth century⁷⁶ can also inform our work on USIA, teasing out the dynamics of localized production and multinational labor within the forces of a larger hegemonic system.

The Universalizing Documentary

USIA's governing investment in producing documentaries with foreign subjects as well as American citizens demands theoretical investigation with respect to the generalizing and abstracting work of the documentary. Its documentary apparatus sharply contrasts with World War II propaganda but recalls earlier government sponsorship of New Deal and "good neighbor" documentaries, which used archetypes of American life to communicate an abstraction of "the nation" and friendly diplomatic relations. What do the abstractions of the American citizen and the foreign (overwhelmingly rural) subject of the USIA documentary suggest? They suggest a subjective field that ambiguates national identity and advocates a universalizing claim to free world citizenship. This ideal of citizenship is grounded in anti-authoritarian principles of democratic governing and efficient capitalist modes of production, which may, in turn, echo Cold War iterations of neoimperial and neoliberal ideologies.

Margaret Mead and a number of her colleagues had advanced ideas about a technocratic understanding of human relations within early theories of communication during the 1930s. Informing the International Motion Picture Division of the Department of State in 1951, Mead further conceptualized how to stage documentary units by balancing economic and political hierarchies within scenarios of familial relations. Accordingly, if culturally different people can be assumed to make up the world, that difference can be observed through an "expert" gaze and utilized toward a technocratic manufacturing of difference. The "experts" create their own version of a culture—

realizing their vision of the world as long as it is available for observation and the cinematic gaze of the observer. Here, Mead provides an “expert” version realizing a vision of the world:

Democracy may be defined essentially as occurring when individuals are free to take the initiative to each other... Throughout our society, the development and acceptance of patterns of equal opportunity to take the initiative in the family, in business, or in government, is the prime characteristic of the democratic process. It is also fortunately a process that can be easily shown in motion picture form. Its significance to the peoples in other countries is that it is an essential part of the American way of life ... and the most effective aid to the growth of the personality of any mode of behavior. It is also the most efficient method of operating in a complicated industrial technology.

It takes all kinds of people to make a world, and so it must be remembered that it takes all kinds of people to make up an Iranian village, an American factory town, an imaginary cartoon world or a community threatened by communism.⁷⁷

Sampling the individual case within the communitarian context of “family,” “business,” and “government” was a hallmark of the state-funded New Deal documentaries. Many New Deal documentaries generalized American life as an allegory of the nation. The USIA documentary abstraction still allegorizes the nation, yet it represents a neoimperial nation in absentia (as the films were viewed outside the US) and proxy nations as the subject of film diplomacy operations. For example, the Japanese subject of the aforementioned *New Eyes, New Ears* (1951) communicates an abstraction that neither fully represents Japan nor the United States. At the same time, the Japanese subject in the film aims to communicate the concept of nationhood to Others as a universalist vision of free world citizenship. The exemplary US citizen-subject of the documentary—whom the US government had earlier used to communicate with the nation in the New Deal campaign—now comes to metonymize a sampling of the nation and some of its welfare programs to those people outside the nation. The film ultimately serves a neoimperial mandate justified as containment under Cold War diplomatic conditions. In the case of *New Eyes, New Ears*, for example, the Smith–Mundt Act ironically made the documentary provisionally un-seeable to Japanese-Americans and other American subjects. The exemplary USIA documentary subject, located outside the U.S., was positioned to occupy a liminal state, since the presumption of the USIA was that *they* (their exemplary audience members) were already willfully considering themselves to be part of or becoming part of the “American experience.” Representationally, such documentary subjects were analogized to those living in the US as either a recent or settled immigrant. Just as Mead conceptualized, the USIA assumed the viewing audiences across the globe would share in the abstraction of democracy as “an American experience,” implying a literal but circumscribed pathway of desire towards the “American experience.”

"Many New Deal documentaries generalized American life as an allegory of the nation. The USIA documentary abstraction still allegorizes the nation, yet it represents a neoimperial nation in absentia (as the films were viewed outside the US) and proxy nations as the subject of film diplomacy operations."

Quarterly reports of mobile screenings that showed American documentaries throughout the postcolonial and neocolonial world demonstrate the dissatisfaction of USIS officers regarding rural viewers' responses to the films. The officers highlighted rural audiences' misunderstanding of technological machinery in the films and their apprehension toward identifying with the documentary

subjects—whom Mead called the "settled Americans" at the onset of the Cold War—that performed mastery of this machinery. Mead identified recent American immigrants in their rural and working-class life as the proper subjects for what later became USIA documentaries. Their lifestyle, accordingly, was more familiar and recognizable by foreign rural populations. The ideology behind such documentary discourse assumes that the American lifestyle is the natural way of pursuing happiness according to efficient capitalist democratic principles. Furthermore, this ideology can be powerfully communicated via the documentary medium, through which every foreign viewer can potentially emulate and identify with the democratic principle, framed as immanent human nature. Put differently, inside every foreign subject, there is an inherently "American" impulse to realize the democratic principle. The documentary discourse, expressing this impulse, implies a trajectory that identifies the foreign rural subject, the recent American immigrant, and the "settled immigrant." Such ideology is built upon the assumption that everyone is an American-to-be, an American-to-become.

"The US government prided itself on using tax money to circulate these images of American ambiguity that packaged stories of Americans-to-be and Americans-to-become within foreign public spheres while censorially keeping these stories away from the watchful eyes of the American public."

The neoimperial and neoliberal phase of government investment in documentary had to invent a representative citizenry to navigate the ambiguity that existed between the identity of an American immigrant and that of a foreign subject hailed to adopt a position as a liberal, democratic capitalist-to-be. This citizenry was sometimes imaged via representations that showcased postcolonial rural subjects who had participated in yearlong audiovisual modernization training. Several films also feature candidates for higher education in professional fields in American universities on visitor or educational visas issued and financially sponsored by the US government. The accounts of these visits show up in the archival paper trail in the form of binational

government and university–government contracts alongside planning and organization memoranda. Footage of these "visits" usually showed up in USIS-sponsored local magazine newsreels during mobile screening campaigns or before feature films in movie theaters. Within these sequences, the overwhelming majority of these "visitors" are seen to return to their countries after the training. This subset of USIA films underscore and literalize the ambiguity inherent to the invitational promise of American-to-be and American-to-become.⁷⁸ This invitational promise becomes the characteristic feature of the neoimperial capitalist relationship exported by the US government through USIA documentary discourse. Meanwhile, the US government prided itself on using tax money to circulate these images of American ambiguity that packaged stories of Americans-to-be and Americans-to-become within foreign public spheres while censorially keeping these stories away from the watchful eyes of the American public. Ironically, the contemporary neoliberal iteration of this ambiguity can be witnessed nowhere more concretely than in the horrifying, globally circulated footage from August 2021 of Afghan citizens clinging to an American aircraft while it gradually lifts off from Kabul airport, signifying the hazardous state of the refugee-to-become!

Literature Review

Several academic and professional fields have published a variety of texts addressing USIA over the past seventy years, but the former legal limitations concerning the access and circulation of its media, as well as the nearly incomprehensible scope of the agency's operations, have resulted in

a disproportionately small amount of research relative to the size and diversity of the archive. The majority of the literature related to USIA fittingly comes from public diplomacy circles and proximate fields such as communication studies or international relations. Though the publications are few, some notable works in film and media studies did emerge during and immediately after the Cold War. On the shoulders of NARA's herculean efforts to bring logic to the unwieldy archive over the past thirty years and a small handful of seminal histories, a recent and exciting burst of film and media studies scholarship has emerged across disciplinary and national boundaries, building the foundation of a potential subfield.

Significant Works and Trends from the Cold War Era

Given its invisibility within the US context and essentially no internal apparatus to record agency memory during the Cold War,⁷⁹ USIA garnered little attention among scholars, the press, and the wider American public. The lack of attention translated to a lack of meaningful critique and accountability for an agency missing its own instruments for historical record keeping. Therefore, many of the publications addressing agency operations during the twentieth century come from those with a direct connection to USIA, resulting in mostly favorable narratives and histories.⁸⁰ While many of these texts read like dry summaries or memoirs, some provide essential procedural and historic details concerning the agency's motion picture apparatus. For example, Wilson Dizard's *The Strategy of Truth* (1961)⁸¹ and Robert Elder's *The Information Machine* (1968) extensively delineate the bureaucratic perspective of film operations, at times offering noteworthy on-the-ground details. More recently, *Warriors of Disinformation* (1995) by Alvin Snyder, who oversaw the film and television division during Reagan's presidency, provides intimate insider knowledge detailing this erratic, partisan, but technology-forward era of USIA moving images.

Although the commentary and historicization specifically concerning USIA moving images sparingly entered academic or journalistic discourse during the Cold War, a few standout publications emerged alongside a fragmented collection of articles from the press and graduate theses. Perhaps the most significant works from this era that directly address USIA films come from the film scholar Richard Dyer MacCann.⁸² While we have some evidence that he previously wrote scripts for the agency⁸³ (giving potential explanation to his mostly uncritical approach), his work nevertheless goes beyond the purely expository or memoir style in other texts, connecting the policy and people behind the films to ideological and aesthetic readings. Another former employee of the agency, Mohammad Issari, wrote his dissertation at the University of Southern California on the cinema of Iran, making him one of the first to give significant attention to USIS filmmaking in a given national context.⁸⁴ Building from Issari's work, Hamid Naficy produced the invaluable *Iran Media Index* in 1984,⁸⁵ which collected rich metadata of several USIA/S titles despite difficulties of access. Other former agency filmmakers within the *Film Comment* circle—such as James Blue, William Bayer, Alvin Fiering, and Gordon Hitchens—composed more self-reflective material regarding the filmmaking processes, some of which directly addressed films made for USIA.⁸⁶

During this period, some US-based and international journalists also wrote incisive pieces on the more expensive and widely disseminated agency titles, like *Vietnam, Vietnam!* (1971) or *Let Poland Be Poland* (1982).⁸⁷ Among prominent film journalists of the time, however, only the *New York Times's* head film critic, Bosley Crowther, gave prolonged attention to USIA motion pictures, at times trumpeting their quality and calling for domestic distribution.⁸⁸

Relative to these other texts, a collection of graduate theses produced during the Cold War essentially remain unexplored. Many only have USIA/S film as a component to a larger study, with

some scholars situating USIA/S moving images within a longer national history of film⁸⁹ and others contextualizing them within a detailed study of USIS operations in a given country.⁹⁰ Though inconsistent in their coverage, parsing these theses can offer a boon to the study of USIA moving images given the often specific and idiosyncratic details found within.⁹¹

Foundational and Contemporary Scholarship after the Archive Opens

As the USIA archive opened up and the Cold War wound down, researchers had enough historical distance to begin piecing together more comprehensive accounts of the global agency's run during the latter half of the twentieth century. These multidisciplinary scholars spent years synthesizing archival artifacts at NARA and the presidential libraries, interviews with former agency officials, and a wealth of other primary documents to produce seminal studies that gave multiple fields a foundation from which to construct more particularized work. More than any other scholar, Nicholas Cull—especially in his 2008 tome, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*—generated an essential record from which other researchers may enter the complicated domain. Alongside Cull, other well-researched books have helped lay key groundwork: Shawn Parry-Giles's *Rhetorical Presidency, Propaganda, and the Cold War, 1945–1955* (2001); Wilson Dizard's *Inventing Public Diplomacy* (2004); Kenneth Osgood's *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (2006); and Gregory Tomlin's *Murrow's Cold War: Public Diplomacy for the Kennedy Administration* (2016).⁹² While these publications have become indispensable to researchers of USIA, these US-based scholars understandably exhibit similar trends to earlier texts on the agency given what and to whom they had access during their research.⁹³ While they welcome more horizontal, transnational, and critical readings, they ultimately rely upon a top-down history through the lens of American policy and culture.

A contemporary wave of USIA/S research within film and media studies has surfaced in recent years, employing a diversity of more acute methodological approaches and utilizing newfound access to an increasingly organized and digitized archive. Though the last five years have seen a relative burst of publications, some scholars had earlier recognized the potential of the domain, leading the way for the more recent contributors. Jennifer Horne's work on James Blue's Colombia Trilogy of documentaries gave a model of how to read policy into film aesthetics. Over the past twenty years, Yuka Tsuchiya's archivally rich publications have provided an authoritative portrait of USIS (and other agencies') media in postwar Japan.⁹⁴ Additionally, scholars Melinda Schwenk-Borrell and Carol Schwalbe were among the first to incisively explore dynamics of race and gender within USIA filmic operations.⁹⁵ In another foundational study, Regina Longo broke new ground connecting aesthetics of state-sponsored documentaries in Italy to the Marshall Plan filmmaking networks from which they emerged.⁹⁶ In the past few years, the works of Sangjoon Lee and Han Sang Kim have inaugurated an exciting, vigorous discourse on the USIA/S and other government films within East Asia.⁹⁷ And many of our contributors to this issue—Brian Real, Sueyoung Park-Primiano, Jülide Etem, Lotte Hoek, Hadi Gharabaghi, and Bret Vukoder—have previously produced scholarly material on USIA moving images.⁹⁸ Several NARA archivists—including Audrey Amidon, Heidi Holmstrom, Ivy Donnell, and Criss Austin, contributors to this issue—have provided insightful pieces on USIA titles that compellingly synthesize archival, historical, and critical perspectives.^{99 100}

Conclusion: Opportunities with the USIA Motion Picture Archive

Before this special issue, no books, edited volumes, or any other journal issues have granted

exclusive attention to the motion picture operations of USIA. Despite its novelty, we hope to have designed this issue as a nexus point rather than a divergence into unexplored terrain, which would only cordon us off within parameters exclusive to our field. The breadth of scholarship embodying different disciplinary frameworks, theoretical lenses, and cultural perspectives deeply inform the shape of this issue. Accordingly, we hope scholars outside of film and media studies find these authors' works to be generative, helping foster transdisciplinary, transmedial, and transnational discourse.

In this spirit, we want to conclude this introductory section by suggesting tangible opportunities the USIA motion picture archive can offer beyond its theoretical and historical potential. First, the massive scope and transnational design of agency films and operations are relatively unique among the motion picture cultures of the twentieth century. The residual USIA archive is multinational, though NARA's College Park location likely holds the vast majority of materials. Nevertheless, these materials can serve as a springboard to develop novel networks between other national archives, libraries, and footage houses throughout the world. In addition to developing beneficial and practical partnerships, such a network could play a significant role in decentralizing the historicization of the Cold War from embedded national, institutional, and disciplinary hegemonies. Recent events like the Excavated Footage Conference at Ajou University in South Korea and the Films of State Conference at NARA have already broken ground in this regard.¹⁰¹ Each of these multinational and multidisciplinary events brought together scholars, archivists, and artists interacting within novel discursive terrains, negotiating new lexicons and methods by which to understand complex motion picture archives like USIA's.

"Recent events like the Excavated Footage Conference at Ajou University in South Korea and the Films of State Conference at NARA have already broken ground...Each of these multinational and multidisciplinary events brought together scholars, archivists, and artists interacting within novel discursive terrains, negotiating new lexicons and methods by which to understand complex motion picture archives like USIA's."

Second, how we choose to animate and participate in these new research networks offers an opportunity in and of itself, particularly within the digital humanities. An eclectic archive of twenty thousand motion picture titles will benefit from and serve key initiatives like the Media Ecology Project (MEP) at Dartmouth College.¹⁰² The platform utilizes a "virtuous cycle" by which scholars may access films while also contributing local, time-based annotations to facilitate future discovery, hone new methods, and create shared terminologies. As archives like USIA's become increasingly digitized, these annotations will also inform and complement artificial intelligence designed to read moving images at scale,¹⁰³ further enhancing research and searchability.

"As accessibility to the USIA motion picture archive (and archival collections, more generally) grows, so too grows the potential to expand pedagogies within film and media studies classrooms."

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, as accessibility to the USIA motion picture archive (and archival collections, more generally) grows, so too grows the potential to expand pedagogies within film and media studies classrooms. USIA's massive digital and material archive provides a space in which students can experience genuine historical discovery, allowing them real agency in annotating the materials, dialogically situating their meaning, and influencing the terms by

which future researchers navigate the variegated histories of the Cold War. In its scope and plurality, the USIA motion picture archive, specifically, can foster meaningful and direct inquiry on several topics, such as cinematic aesthetics, media technologies, film genre, visible/invisible media labor, cultural policy, national cinemas, copyright, logistics of film distribution, film festival cultures, and political rhetoric, among many others. Importantly, in leveraging platforms such as MEP, NARA's online tools, and even YouTube, these pedagogical and annotative opportunities can and should extend beyond academic circles, helping disentangle the hierarchical and often exclusionary systems by which history takes shape.

We, the editors, are incredibly thankful to our contributors, our interviewees, our reviewers, our copy editor, Denise Logsdon, the Dartmouth Library, the *Journal of e-Media Studies*, and Dr. Mark Williams, who initiated this enriching experience for us. We are also thankful for their patience and collaborative spirit in making this issue happen during the difficulties of a pandemic. Coming to this as two adjunct professors in a state of precarious employment, we hope this issue and future USIA research are imbued with a recognition of the labor inherent in the preservation, restoration, cataloging, and research of the archive as well as the diverse and typically invisible labor behind the USIA films themselves. Above all, we want this special issue to serve as an invitation to anyone interested in the rich and complicated motion picture archive of the United States Information Agency.

About the Authors

Hadi Gharabaghi has a PhD in cinema studies from New York University. His archival research makes a case for the emergence of documentary diplomacy during the early history of the United States Information Service (USIS)/Iran relations. His publications include a chapter in the edited volume *Cinema of the Arab World: Contemporary Directions in Theory and Practice* (Palgrave, 2020), essays in the summer 2021 print issue and the Winter 2022 online teaching dossier section of the *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*, an essay on the emerging Iranian horror genre in the forthcoming volume *Global Horror: Hybridity and Alterity in Transnational Horror Film* (Cognella, 2022), and the edited volume, *Governing Genealogies of Film Education* (co-edited with Terri Ginsberg, forthcoming 2022).

Bret Vukoder recently received his PhD in Literary and Cultural Studies at Carnegie Mellon University. He has published chapters (with Mark Williams) in the edited volumes, *Documentary Film: An Aesthetic and Political Crossroads* (Promoteo Editorial, 2020) and *Provenance and Early Cinema* (Indiana UP, 2021). His forthcoming works further engage USIA and WWI archives, addressing how systems of policy, culture, and bureaucracy inform motion picture aesthetics, circulation, and reception. Dr. Vukoder also serves as the co-director of the USIA and WWI studies for the Media Ecology Project at Dartmouth College.

¹ Before you navigate this issue, we need to provide an essential note on the agency's name. Prior the US Information Agency's (USIA) official launch in 1953, the overseas information initiatives consistently employed the label US Information Service (USIS). Because of audience familiarity with the USIS name before 1953, USIA decided to keep the USIS brand attached to all its posts abroad. As one would expect, the usage of the two names in agency documentation and history has produced some confusion among those first exploring the archive. To add another layer of confusion, the agency temporarily changed its name between 1977 and 1982 to the US International Communications Agency (USICA) when it briefly integrated the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural affairs (CU) into its operations. Not long after the end of the Cold War in 1994, the nine-person Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) began oversight of USIA, which fully dissolved into BBG by 1999. In 2017 Congress approved a reorganization to form the US Agency for Global Media (USAGM), which returned to an agency led by a single Senate-approved director rather than a board.

² Internally, as far back as the 1951 meeting of the Film Advisory Committee, during which key figures from government and Hollywood developed foundational motion pictures strategies for the agency, Under Secretary of State James Webb forcefully acknowledged, “You are dealing with a medium that can and will have a tremendous impact.” Throughout its history, others associated with USIA embraced the singular power of motion pictures. Former agency official and historian Wilson Dizard, for example, called motion pictures “a powerful voice, perhaps our strongest single means of influencing world public opinion.” And one-time USIA public affairs officer John Henderson notes: “All types of films and video tapes reach an enormous audience abroad. In places where the number of radio receivers is limited, films are the most effective way of reaching mass audiences.” Respectively, see “Transcripts of Proceedings, Film Advisory Committee, Monday, September 24, 1951,” Department of State, Washington, DC, A-14, entry P218, 1948–1958, RG 306: Records of the USIA, 1900–2003, NACP; Wilson P. Dizard, *The Strategy of Truth: The Story of the U.S. Information Service* (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1961), 88; John W. Henderson, *The United States Information Agency* (New York: Praeger, 1969), 77.

³ At the end of the Cold War, Congress wrote an amendment for the Smith–Mundt Act that designated the National Archives as the primary steward of USIA’s materials, also creating a process by which even new materials would eventually become available to the US public. The amendment mandated that the USIA director “make [materials] available to the Archivists of the United States for domestic distribution . . . 12 years after her preparation of the material.” See Weston Sager, “Apple Pie Propaganda? The Smith-Mundt Act Before and After the Repeal of the Domestic Distribution Ban,” *Northwestern University Law Review* 109, no. 2 (2015), 524.

⁴ The National Archives currently cites 23,000 separate movie titles within its wider USIA record group (RG 306). While some of these are stock footage, fragments of films, or repeat titles, the majority are uniquely composed titles. Of these 23,000 listings, roughly 3,800 are currently digitized, with the digitization process ongoing.

⁵ Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945–1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁶ To view this dynamic at work through a case study, see Hadi Gharabaghi, “The Syracuse Mission to Iran during the 1950s and the Rise of Documentary Diplomacy,” *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 60, no. 4 (2021), 9–36.

⁷ Burton Palau, “The Smith–Mundt Act: A Legislative History,” *Journalism Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (1953), 301–302.

⁸ Rather than initially embracing a proactive, dialogic approach to its information and propaganda, much of the momentum behind the Smith–Mundt Act was a product of reactionary, fear-mongering politics that sought to only respond to or anticipate Soviet actions. The Truman Doctrine, though often historically reduced to the official “start” of the Cold War, is one manifestation of this mindset, seeking to clamp down on the spread of communist cells in Greece and Turkey. The counterpropaganda approach defined much of USIA’s early operations.

⁹ The short-lived Office of International Information and Cultural Affairs operated out of the State Department from 1946 to 1947.

¹⁰ Palau, “Smith–Mundt Act,” 313.

¹¹ Shawn J. Parry-Giles, “Rhetorical Experimentation and the Cold War, 1947–1953: The Development of an Internationalist Approach to Propaganda,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 80, no. 4 (2009), 451.

¹² Language within the bill explicitly protects these private interests, saying that any information agency “shall not enter into the performance of [its] services . . . where such services may be performed adequately by private American individuals,” which would supposedly prevent the formation of a “monopoly” in “any . . . medium of information.” For the full bill, see United States House of Representatives, “The United States Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948,” *Govtrack.us*, 80th Congress, Second Session, House Resolution 3342, passed January 27, 1948.

¹³ Sager, “Apple Pie Propaganda,” 519, 522–3.

¹⁴ Cull, *Cold War*, 23–4.

¹⁵ This approach to adapt and expand the preexisting information infrastructure vastly differed from the US government's approach after World War I. By the end of 1919, the Committee on Public Information (known more colloquially as the Creel Committee) rapidly shut down and dismantled most of its infrastructure. See Alan Axelrod, *Selling the Great War: The Making of American Propaganda* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2009), 217–8; Furthermore, all major European and Asian regional powers had established cultural centers of propaganda well before the US in anticipation of WWII. Britain, France, and the Soviet Union continued expanding their cultural centers after WWII. Mohammad Ali Issari, *Cinema in Iran: 1900–1979* (Scarecrow Press, 1989), 1–4.

¹⁶ In addition to the office of the United States Information Services within the Division of Cultural Relations (DCR), a bureaucratic maze of offices and bureaus grew within the US government over the course of the Second World War. All of these entities managed oversight for planning and policy of film and media diplomacy, while specific offices handled the planning and screening of moving image, film, and, later, televisual operations: The Office of Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA, 1940–1944); the Office of Inter-American Affairs (OIAA, 1944–1945); Motion Picture Bureau (1942–1945); Motion Picture Division (1942–1945), Interim International Information Service (IIIS, 1944–1945); Office of International Information and Cultural Affairs (OIC, 1946–1947), Voice of America (VOA, 1942 to present); United States Information and Educational Services (USIE, 1948–1953); Office of Educational Exchange (OEX, 1948–1953); Office of International Information (OII, 1948–1953); International Motion Picture Division (IMPD, 1948–1953); Campaign of Truth (1951–1953), which included the Advisory Committee for Information and Film Advisory Committee and Television Advisory Committee; The Point Four Program (1949–1960) transitioned into Technical Cooperation Administration (TCA) and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) by 1960, a title under which the institution still operates. USIE operated along with the International Press and Publications (INP) and the International Broadcasting Division (IBD). USIE Newsletter 4, September 1951, VI-C7; Background books, IMS, USIE/OIAA Newsletters; Record Group (RG) 59, the United States National Archives at College Park (NACP); George N. Shuster, "The Nature and Development of United States Cultural Relations," in *Cultural Affairs and Foreign Relations*, ed. Robert Blum (Prentice-Hall/The American Assembly, Columbia University, 1963), 8–9; Arch A. Mercy, "Social Uses of the Motion Picture," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 250 (1947), 101; Arthur L. Mayer, "Fact into Film," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (Summer 1944), 217; Karen M. Paget, "From Cooperation to Covert Action: The US Government and Students, 1940–52," in *US Government, Citizen Groups and the Cold War: The State-Private Network*, eds. Helen Laville and Hugh Wilford (Routledge, 2006), 68.

¹⁷ Albert Hemsing breaks the Marshall Plan films down into seven primary categories whose themes and styles we can map onto much of USIA's later filmic output: (1) "Straightforward reports on . . . aid projects primarily intended for the citizens of that nation"; (2) "Films reporting to all the ECA nations" touting "the Marshall Plan's achievements"—all six of these titles, interestingly, were in Technicolor; (3) "European unity, free trade, and international cooperation"; (4) "Anti-Communist Cold War propaganda"; (5) "Productivity and technical assistance themes"; (6) "Mutual security, i.e. strengthening NATO's defenses"; and (7) "Films for American television," a distribution practice that was almost completely eliminated after 1953. For this excellent, firsthand account of Marshall Plan film operations and descriptions of several of the films, see Hemsing, "The Marshall Plan's European Film Unit, 1948–1955: A Memoir and Filmography," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 14, no. 3 (1994), 269–97.

¹⁸ Hemsing, "Marshall Plan's European Film Unit," 273–4.

¹⁹ These film titles can now be found within Record Group 306 (USIA) at the National Archives, indicating their later usage within USIA distribution networks. The local identifiers at NARA are 306.5145 (*Handicraft Town*), 306.73 (*The Home We Love*), and 306.5661 (*The Hour of Choice*).

²⁰ Beyond Marshall Plan films, we can also look to the films produced on behalf of the World War II–era Office of Inter-American Affairs (OIAA), which navigate representation and idioms of cultures outside of the United States with clear policy goals at hand. OIAA primarily focused on US alliances with Latin American nations during World War II, meaning many of its titles represent the histories and cultures of these nations in addition to shared wartime interests. While these materials have their own record group (229) at the National Archives in College Park, many of the films

are also within USIA Record Group 306. They, like the Marshall Plan films, were clearly distributed within USIA film networks. See footnote 16 for more details on agency genealogies.

²¹ We can trace much of USIA's distribution metadata (year produced, released, retired), including that for the Marshall Plan and OIAA films, through a single, very useful document produced by the agency in 1996. See "United States Information Agency Television and Film Service: Retired Title and Catalog, Alphabetical Listing," April 25, 1996, Records of the United States Information Agency, Record Group 306, National Archives at College Park, Maryland, Motion Picture, Sound, and Video Research Room.

²² The indispensable research and publications of Linda Christensen and Regina Longo, along with the work of Elizabeth Heffelfinger, offer an essential foundation for further exploration of Marshall Plan motion pictures. See Linda Christensen's thorough website, sellingdemocracy.org; Regina Longo, "Between Documentary and Neorealism: Marshall Plan Films in Italy (1948–1955)," *California Italian Studies* 3, no. 2 (2012), 1–45; Elizabeth Heffelfinger, "Foreign Policy, Domestic Fiction: Government-Sponsored Documentaries and Network Television Promote the Marshall Plan at Home," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 28, no. 1 (2008), 1–21.

²³ For more information, see Gharabaghi, "Syracuse Mission to Iran," 21–3.

²⁴ For an extended discussion of Margaret Mead's documentary memos and the concept of the "documentary bible," see Gharabaghi, "Syracuse Mission to Iran," 15–9; "Founding of a Documentary Bible of Cold War Propaganda," "American Mice Grow Big!": The Syracuse Audiovisual Mission in Iran and the Rise of Documentary Diplomacy" (PhD diss., New York University, 2018); and "Common Denominator Film Series," February–May 1951, SfAA to IMPD, Department of State, Contract no. SCC-1a-1723, Film Project, 1950–1952, boxes E122–E125, Margaret Mead Papers, LOC.

²⁵ Alongside entities like the Syracuse Film Group in Iran, Walter Wittich's career interestingly demonstrates some of the intermingling between government motion picture operations and the development of audiovisual pedagogy in US schools and universities. In addition to working as a faculty member at Wisconsin, he also served as the head of the Bureau of Audio Visual Instruction, coauthoring with Charles F. Schuller *Audio Visual Materials: Their Nature and Use* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1953). See his brief biography at a website describing a scholarship named in his honor: wisc.academicworks.com/opportunities/43858.

²⁶ "Transcripts of Proceedings, Film Advisory Committee, Monday, September 24, 1951," Department of State, Washington, DC, C-32, entry P218, 1948–1958, RG 306: Records of the USIA, 1900–2003, NACP.

²⁷ "Overseas Information Programs of the United States: Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Foreign Relations," United States Senate, 82nd Congress, Second Session, November 20–21, 1952.

²⁸ The Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, Civil Information and Education Section (SCAP-CIE) was an extensive propaganda and "education" program throughout post-WWII Japan designed to instantiate democratic, market-based ideologies through varied media and spaces. Its operations were later absorbed and managed by USIA, with films such as *New Eyes*, *New Ears* being distributed within USIA networks.

²⁹ For further scholarship on SCAP-CIE, USIS, and other US media operations in Japan, see the excellent works of Dr. Yuka Tsuchiya of Kyoto University, especially her forthcoming book, *Science, Technology and the Cultural Cold War in Asia: From Atoms for Peace to Space Flight* (London: Routledge, 2022).

³⁰ The credits on the existing digitally transferred copy of the film identifies McNeil Withers for directing and Mohammad Ali Issari and Withers for the story. During an interview, Issari claimed credit for directing the film and clarified that they used Withers's name to receive funding from USIS and Point Four to make the film. The Cinematographic Center (State Secretariat for Fine Arts) is listed as the producer. Except for Paul Obluda's English narration, the rest of the crew are all Iranian: cameraman (Naser Rifaat), editor (Rouhollah Emami), and sound (Cyrus Shabdiz). For further information about the Syracuse mission in Iran as the context of production for the film, see Gharabaghi, "Syracuse Mission to Iran" and "'American Mice Grow Big!'", 274–405.

³¹ While we can only speculate, the agency's focus on numbers and "effectiveness," during the 1950s perhaps reflects USIA's genealogical roots in agencies like OWI during WWII, whose output was a function of near-total war. Also, Eisenhower (a former general) maybe imbued the early USIA with his militaristic sensibilities. Regardless, we can trace the impetus to quantify "effectiveness" within the rhetoric of planning and policy, as well as the reports USIA provided to Congress. During the 1951 meeting of the Film Advising Committee, for example, Edwards notes the importance of "Evidence of Effectiveness," stating, "After we get all through with some of the detailed budgets, the men in the Congress very appropriately say, 'How effective are you? What evidence do you have that you are effective?' So over the months, we accumulate this type of information which invariably comes from dispatches from our Information Centers." See "Film Advisory Committee," 1951, B-19. The annual reports to Congress affirm this. Rather than extensively describing the films' contents, the filmmakers behind the titles, or audience experience, these USIA reports from the 1950s primarily highlight the number of films produced, total audience count, and percentage of film production done with local labor. See "Report to the Congress," United States Information Agency, Vol. 1-1, 1953–1962, Indiana University, Google Books.

³² Cull, *Cold War*, 96.

³³ J. Cheever Cowdin only stayed on as director of the motion picture division for roughly half a year. Andrew W. Smith Jr. took over the role in Cowdin's wake. Smith had a background in sales for both Warner Brothers and RKO. By highlighting that Streibert hired two people with backgrounds in the business of film (rather than filmmaking), we can get a firmer sense of his vision for the scope and mission of the motion picture division. For details on these hires, see "Departments of State, Justice, and Commerce and the United States Information Agency Appropriations, 1955: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Departments of State, Justice, and Commerce," United States House of Representatives, Eighty-Third Congress, Second Session on H.R. 8067, March 1954.

³⁴ "The Opening of Atoms for Peace Fair," *Akhbār-e Iran*, episode 90, 306.IN.090. Source: 35mm MPPC (P Copy), Records of the United States Information Agency, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

³⁵ Scholars of the "rhetorical presidency" have explored these contradictions between Eisenhower's and Foster-Dulles's foreign policy approaches at length. See Chris Tudda, *The Truth Is Our Weapon: The Rhetorical Diplomacy of Dwight D. Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006); Shawn J. Parry-Giles, "The Eisenhower Administration's Conceptualization of the USIA: The Development of Overt and Covert Propaganda Strategies," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (1994), 263–76; and Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006).

³⁶ Regarding the new global landscape, by 1960, several revolutions in Latin America and Southeast Asia had occurred or begun. Furthermore, 1960 is often labeled by Western scholars as the "year of Africa," given the several African nations that fought for and recovered their sovereignty from colonial powers that year. On USIA's side of things, the agency's third director, George V. Allen, resigned after the 1960 general election, leaving a temporary leadership vacuum. He had always been a proponent of a more dialogic approach to agency operations and did not see a willingness to change within the agency ranks. In Allen's last hearing with Congress, he passionately argued that USIA "cannot restrict [itself] solely to the exposition of the fallacy of communism. Rather, [it should] devote [its] energies to setting out what the United States is . . . this positive approach is more beneficial . . . and more in accord with the basic mission of the agency." See Richard Dyer MacCann, "Film and Foreign Policy: The USIA, 1962–1967," *Cinema Journal* 9, no. 1 (1969), 27.

³⁷ Many idealized Kennedy's hires as young and ambitious, the "best and the brightest" or "action intellectuals." See Michael Dunne, "Kennedy's Alliance for Progress: Countering Revolution in Latin America: Part I: From the White House to the Charter of Punta del Este," *International Affairs* 89, no. 6 (2013), 437.

³⁸ Calling him a "teacher-producer," Richard Dyer MacCann compares George Stevens Jr.'s leadership to Irving Thalberg's revolutionary tenure at MGM in the 1930s. See MacCann, "Film and Foreign Policy," 32.

³⁹ Filmmaker Alvin Fiering, also a professor of film at Boston University, speaks to these processes and cultures

Stevens fostered. In a 1963 article, he tells the story of a \$5,000 grant he received from USIA (along with five other filmmakers) to make his documentary *Sculptor*. See Firing, "Reflections on Making SCULPTOR," *Film Comment* 1, no. 6 (1963), 48–50.

⁴⁰ By 1967 roughly 10 percent of the agency's total staff went to its operations in Vietnam. See Henderson, *United States Information Agency*, 248.

⁴¹ Both films are digitized within NARA's collections, though *The Rag Doll* is missing its sixth and final reel. See *Sons of Hai Ba Trung* (306.4973) and *The Rag Doll* (306.2940).

⁴² For an analysis of *The Rag Doll* and some of the fascinating history surrounding the conflict over its distribution, see the forthcoming article by Bret Vukoder, "Reframing Historiographic Paradigms of USIA Motion Picture Research in the American Context."

⁴³ As is the case with some work addressing national cinemas, this scholarship on Vietnamese cinema can at times be reductive. Within Western scholarship, however, there are some footholds by which to consider Vietnamese filmic idioms and inform our reading of USIS/JUSPAO titles from this era. See John Charlot, "Vietnamese Cinema: First Views," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 22, no. 1 (1999), 442–52; Thong Win, "Screening the Revolution in Rural Vietnam: Cinema across the Mekong Delta," *The Colonial Documentary Film in South and South-East Asia*, eds. Ian Aitken and Camille Deprez (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 171–85; Stéphanie Ponsavady, "Vietnamese Cinema on the Move: Representing Mobility and Circulating Movies in Vietnam and Abroad," *Transfers* 2, no. 1 (2012), 152–8; Karen Jaehne, "Cinema in Vietnam: When the Shooting Stopped . . . and the Filming Began," *Cineaste* 17, no. 2 (1989), 32–7; and Hubert Niogret, "Vietnamese Cinema and Its Contradictions," *Positive Monthly Review of Cinema*, June 2014, 62–5.

⁴⁴ William Bayer (anonymous in original publication), "Films in Vietnam," *Film Comment* 5, no. 2 (1969), 46–80.

⁴⁵ Though production of *Vietnam, Vietnam!* began in 1967 and finished in 1969, it was not ready for circulation until 1971, by which point the United States' and the world's opinion on the US invasion of Vietnam had become overwhelmingly negative. Even with John Ford as producer and Charlton Heston as narrator, many PAOs at USIS posts were cognizant that audiences would immediately recognize the film as out of touch, ham-fisted, and even offensive—despite its noteworthy style. Several PAOs did not use the title. Frank Shakespeare, the USIA director at the time, even said the "production must be considered basically archival, [since] it is not really suited for dealing with the contemporary scene." See Frank Shakespeare, "All PAOs," August 20, 1971, "Vietnam, Vietnam" folder, Rights and Permission Files, Box 80, Records of the US Information Agency, Record Group 306, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁴⁶ In 1975 a private group called the Panel on International Information, Education, and Cultural Relations led by former CBS president Frank Stanton (hence its more familiar name, the Stanton Panel), wrote a report critiquing USIA. They went as far as calling for its reabsorption into the State Department and losing its seat on the National Security Council. See David Binder, "Panel Proposes Abolishing USIA," *New York Times*, March 12, 1975, 6.

⁴⁷ Adopting a different tone and tack from the Stanton Panel, though still seeking change, a group of 148 USIA employees released a joint letter on November 3, 1976—the day after Jimmy Carter's victory at the polls. The letter tells how "the agency was formed in an age when the media were regarded as powerful weapons in the battle for men's minds," but "USIA has long since outgrown that simplistic view. The "proper mode of discourse is the dialogue," it claims, later suggesting actionable changes for the agency. See "USIA and the Future of Public Diplomacy," November 3, 1976, Historical Collection, Subject File, 1953–1999, A1 1066, Box 44, Records of the US Information Agency, Record Group 306, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁴⁸ In October 1977, under Reorganization Plan No. 2, the government consolidated USIA and the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (CU), leading to the name USICA. See Cull, *Cold War*, 370.

⁴⁹ Cull, *Cold War*, 370.

⁵⁰ Though the program has been difficult to locate at NARA, a 1976 NASA report for President Ford gives us some details about *Salute by Satellite*. Its technological novelty at the time, as well as its scope, warrants further scholarly attention. According to the report, fifteen programs “covered bicentennial celebrations of various ethnic groups” and were “transmitted to 32 countries” after an introduction by President Ford. “These programs were carried by TV stations around the world and seen by an audience of approximately 100 million.” For more details, see “Aeronautics and Space Report of the President: 1976 Activities,” National Aeronautics and Space Administration, 91, history.nasa.gov/presrep1976.pdf.

⁵¹ For a great piece on the USIA Young Filmmaker Bicentennial Grant Project and details of some of these films—such as the trippy animated short *200*—see an essay by one of our issue’s contributors: Audrey Amidon, “Celebrating America: The USIA Young Filmmaker Bicentennial Grant Project,” *Unwritten Record*, July 7, 2017, unwritten-record.blogs.archives.gov/2017/07/07/.

⁵² While many of these films are certainly tame or dated in their critique of embedded institutional inequalities within the United States, they are still a bit of an anomaly within the catalog (with the exception of some films from the mid-1960s). Some salient titles USIA produced or circulated include *National Women’s Conference: A Question of Choices* (1977; 306.10521), *The New Indians* (1977; 306.9534), *Equal Employment at USICA* (1979; 306.9621), and *Let’s Look at the Issue: Equal Employment Opportunity* (1979; 306.9449). While the film output changed in the late 70s, the agency ironically still exhibited widespread biases within its own walls. It is not out of the question that these latter two films were produced as a result of these internal issues. Led by Luba Medina, several women formerly employed by the agency brought a class action lawsuit against USICA in 1977, justly citing gender discrimination in the hiring processes. The case was finally settled in the 1990s, with the plaintiffs winning a large compensatory sum. See Cull, *Cold War*, 375–6.

⁵³ Bruce Herschensohn, “U.S.I.A. U.S.I.A. U.S.I.A.,” *New York Times*, April 2, 1975, 39. A year after this publication, Herschensohn expanded these sentiments into a larger critique of U.S. news media in his book *The Gods of Antenna*, a somewhat abstractly-written text that supports Nixon and the motives behind the Vietnam War after Watergate and the war’s conclusion. The book in some ways presupposes the rallying cry of later figures like Roger Ailes, accusing mainstream American media of an unchecked liberal bias. See Bruce Herschensohn, *The Gods of Antenna* (New Rochelle: Arlington House Publishers, 1976).

⁵⁴ Wanting to reinvigorate the agency’s brand from earlier periods of the Cold War and distance themselves from Carter’s methods, Reagan and Wick officially changed the agency’s name back to the US Information Agency (USIA) from USICA in 1982.

⁵⁵ The costs of *Let Poland Be Poland* reached \$750,000, half a million more than *Vietnam, Vietnam!*. Reflective of Reagan’s ideologies, Wick and the agency sought out private funding to support the program, sending letters to potential donors that said, “Contributions are keeping with President Reagan’s philosophy of voluntarism and his wish for increased private sector involvement in the business of the government.” Companies like Mobil Oil and Phillip Morris, as well as organizations like the Carthage Foundation, heeded Reagan’s call and paid the majority of the program’s production costs. Therefore, figures from these corporate or conservative groups continued to have Wick’s ear throughout the 1980s, often involving themselves in USIA decision-making processes. See “Let Poland Be Poland” folder, Rights and Permission Files, Box 50, Records of the US Information Agency, Record Group 306, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁵⁶ While the idea had been brewing for a while at the agency, the US invasion of Grenada in 1983 ultimately led to the first usage of Worldnet’s live dialogic format. Jeanne Kirkpatrick, along with Prime Ministers Sir John Compton of St. Lucia and Tom Adams of Barbados, responded in real time to journalists’ questions about the invasion. According to Alvin Snyder, the agency’s director of motion pictures and television at the time, this effort was successful, and “criticism of the Grenada invasion evaporated overnight.” For the next several years, even after Worldnet became a channel, the agency continued to produce these “dialogues” on a very frequent basis, resulting in roughly 4,500 of these programs. They were cheap to make and, as our issue’s interviewee Peter Vaselopulos notes, journalists (and sometimes everyday citizens) could get access to figures like Warren Burger, the chief justice of the US Supreme

Court. For much more detail about the creation of Worldnet, see Alvin Snyder, *Warriors of Disinformation: How Lies, Videotape, and the USIA Won the Cold War* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1995).

⁵⁷ One key element of these efforts, which came five years before the AMRC, was the agency's TV Satellite File programming (TVSF). Running between early 1983 and 1990 and resulting in 385 episodes, the TVSF series gave bullet-pointed, aesthetically tame articulations of policy and scenes of everyday life in à la carte fashion, making them apt for (unattributed) usage and circulation by other media outlets. USIA would sell these packages to news entities, like VISNEWS, that would add their own narration to the footage and disseminate agency footage in an essentially unregulated manner. See "USIA: Recent Developments," Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 98th Congress, First Session, September 22, 1983.

⁵⁸ The tradition of involving American universities in film diplomacy within USIA goes back to the Syracuse mission in Iran and throughout the region in Turkey, Greece, and the Arab world. For more information, see Gharabaghi, "Syracuse Mission to Iran" and "American Mice Grow Big!" Additionally, minutes from the Film Advisory Committee meeting (1951)—which was comprised of US government officials, academics, and executive members of American film industry—offer great genealogical insight into the alliance between government and nongovernmental institutions of governing and higher education in the United States during the early Cold War. The entire paper trail of this meeting is available on Dartmouth College library's website as a supplement to this special issue.

⁵⁹ Mujahideen emerged as an insurgency fighting the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan (1979–1989). In the course of their armed resistance, they received military training and machinery from the CIA. They also harbored regional fighters. A key figure among them was Osama bin Laden, the rich Saudi citizen who made friendly alliances with the CIA for their support in fighting the Soviet occupation. Unfortunately, the tumultuous course of Afghans' struggle for freedom did not end with purging the Soviet army from the country. Afghanistan became the breeding ground for militant revolutionary Islam in the region, both through the support of the CIA and in the aftermath of the leftist-Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 that established an Islamic Republic. A rivalry between the more moderate mujahideen and the far more conservative Taliban (another CIA-supported group) eventually led to the isolation of mujahideen altogether. For more information, see Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, "Understanding the Taliban and Insurgency in Afghanistan," *Orbis* 51, no. 1 (2007), 71–89; Tahir Amin, "Afghan Resistance: Past, Present, and Future," *Asian Survey* 24, no. 4 (1984), 373–99; Lester W. Grau, "The Soviet-Afghan War: A Superpower Mired in the Mountains," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 17, no. 1 (2004), 129–51; and Ali Ahmad Jalali and Lester W. Grau, *Afghan Guerrilla Warfare: In the Words of the Mujahideen Fighters* (Zenith Press, 2001).

⁶⁰ Wick often boasted that Worldnet reached two billion people annually, which was far overblown. Cull places the total at around half of that. Some in the agency thought Wick exaggerated the numbers to convince Congress to give USIA more funding. Worldnet's first program director, David Wilson, even joked with Wick at one point, saying, "Mr. Wick, if you keep using these statistics, within three months more people will have seen Worldnet . . . than exist in the world." See Cull, *Cold War*, 446; and Charles Stuart Kennedy, "Interview with David Michael Wilson," *Frontline Diplomacy: The Foreign Affairs of Oral History Collection for the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training*, retrieved from the Library of Congress, 2001.

⁶¹ *Parazit* translates to "television snow" or "television distortion." The name reflects some of the mythologies that define VOA's history, namely the prolonged battle to overcome Soviet jamming of the VOA radio signal during the Cold War. It suggests a romanticized ethos that says, "we share information but never block it."

⁶² For an analysis of the new show, see Mehdi Semati, "The Geopolitics of Parazit, the Iranian Televisual Sphere, and the Global Infrastructure of Political Humor," *International Journal of Media and Culture* 10, no. 1–2 (2012), 119–30.

⁶³ For the roughly twenty years before the restructuring into USAGM, much of the extant infrastructure and operations that remained from USIA were managed by BBG. Rather than a single director, BBG ran through a board of nine people—four Republicans, four Democrats, and the secretary of state. In 2018 BBG changed to the US Agency for Global Media (USAGM), which returned to a model in which a single Senate-approved director (now, of course, called a CEO) oversaw agency operations. See "History," US Agency for Global Media, usagm.gov/who-we-are/history/.

⁶⁴ President Trump's first nominee of the new USAGM was Michael Pack, a "filmmaker" with staunch conservative bona fides. His appointment was held up for a long time in the Senate, finally getting approval in June 2020. Many career employees at VOA immediately sounded the alarm, leading to both mass resignations and a purge of some who were critical of Pack. Upon Biden's presidency, Pack unceremoniously resigned, leaving a legacy of distrust and scandal. Among several articles published at the time, see David Folkenflik, "U.S. Agency Targets Its Own Journalists' Independence," NPR, October 27, 2020, [npr.org](https://www.npr.org); and "Defined by Scandal at Voice of America, CEO Resigns at Biden's Request," NPR, January 20, 2021, [npr.org](https://www.npr.org).

⁶⁵ Some recent VOA programs even focus on news literacy and disinformation, hearkening back to some of USIA's audiovisual "education" initiatives from the 1950s. For example, see such 2021 programs as "Cote d'Ivoire: Factchecking and Fighting Fake News" or "Online Panel Discussion: Confronting Disinformation in Asia" in Media Development, US Agency for Global Media, usagm.gov/our-work/media-development/.

⁶⁶ For more information on adopting film diplomacy from culture and public diplomacy, see Gharabaghi's introduction, "Documentary Diplomacy: A Toolkit of Governmentality" in "American Mice Grow Big," 14–33.

⁶⁷ For a more extensive discussion, see Gharabaghi, "Syracuse Mission to Iran," 15–8.

⁶⁸ A former USIA official from the early Cold War and historian of the agency, Wilson Dizard, exemplifies this position, wanting to complement Hollywood's reach rather than challenge it. In his 1961 book, he asked, "What ideas of American life do foreign audiences form from Hollywood? At best, their image is only a partial one and therefore is somewhat distorted . . . [but] Hollywood is successful overseas because it does a better job of touching the instincts of its audience . . . present[ing] an entertainment reality—reality of interests if not of life." See Dizard, *Strategy of Truth*, 92–3.

⁶⁹ Alvin Snyder, for example, speaks to this process during his tenure as director of the motion picture division in the 1980s, though the process existed throughout the life of the agency. In addition to circulating several VHS tapes of contemporary Hollywood films to USIS locations throughout the world, the agency also got rights to distribute classics, such as the full Charlie Chaplin catalog. See Snyder, *Warriors of Disinformation*, 147–8.

⁷⁰ See Jennifer Horne, "Experiments in Propaganda: Reintroducing James Blue's Columbia Trilogy," *Moving Image* 9, no. 1 (2009), 183–200; and Joshua Glick, *Los Angeles Documentary and the Production of Public History, 1958–1977* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018).

⁷¹ Cindy Maram, "A Chat w/ Oscar Nominated Film Editor Robert Dalva," *Dig IN Magazine*, December 21, 2012, diginmag.com.

⁷² Concerning the University of Southern California filmmaker ecosystem, there are some research threads we may be able to more fully explore, such as Verna Fields's collaboration with Marcia and George Lucas on the USIA film *Journey to the Pacific*. Their involvement with USIA is typically just a biographical note in most sources, but we can perhaps learn more about the connections between Hollywood and USIA motion pictures during the 60s and 70s by tugging on this thread a bit more. For one of these quick biographical notes, see Gerald Peary, "Verna Fields," *Edited By: Women Film Editors* (Princeton University), womenfilmeditors.princeton.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/FIELDS_Gerald_Peary.pdf.

⁷³ "The Sixties II: A Social Conscience," *Film Comment* 20, no. 1 (1984), 36–9.

⁷⁴ Brian Real, "The Hidden History of the American Film Institute: The Cold War, Arts Policy, and American Film Preservation," *Moving Image* 18, no. 1 (2018), 24–47.

⁷⁵ Dizard highlights USIA's and Hollywood's similar, influential global scope and operations in 1961, noting, "To supplement commercial distribution of American films abroad, USIS posts operate the largest non-commercial film network in the world." See Dizard, *Strategy of Truth*, 88.

⁷⁶ For example, Daniel Steinhart, *Runaway Hollywood: Internationalizing Postwar Production and Location Shooting* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2019).

⁷⁷ "General Report no. 1, Presenting the United States to the Target Areas," "Common Denominator Film Series," SCC-1a-1723, Margaret Mead Papers, LOC; and "Overall Program Reports, Report no. 1," "Common Denominator Film Series," SCC-1a-1723, Margaret Mead Papers, LOC.

⁷⁸ For further research on Mead's documentary bible, see Gharabaghi, "'American Mice Grow Big'..." (2018) and "'Common Denominator Film Series' (1951): Margaret Mead & the Making of a Cold War Documentary Bible," *Governing Genealogies of Film Education* (Forthcoming 2022). For examples of "visit" films, look to two notable but different titles in NARA's collection, which show students' experiences of a US government-sponsored travel visa: "US Government Invites Iranian Graduates to New York," *Akhbar-e Iran* [Iran News], USIS Iran (306-IN-109); and *Have a Coke* (306.3983), which, through a light and humorous tone, features the perspective of three Ethiopian students as they begin their studies at UCLA.

⁷⁹ As far back as 1968, scholar Robert Elder recognized this issue: "There is a need for a centralized Agency memory, both to know in detail the Agency's past and to store historical and present facts which may be needed at a moment's notice for use in policy making in the future. By 1967, USIA had a [single] professional Agency historian actively at work." See Robert Elder, *The Information Machine: The United States Information Agency and American Foreign Policy* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1968), 21.

⁸⁰ One notable (and very sensationalized) exception is Eugene Castle, *Billions, Blunders, and Baloney: The Fantastic Story of How Uncle Sam Is Squandering Your Money Overseas* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1955).

⁸¹ Dizard also published a more self-reflective and critical follow-up book in the wake of USIA's dissolution that is worth attention: Wilson P. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004).

⁸² In addition to MacCann's article, "Film and Foreign Policy," see his book; one chapter draws heavily from this article. Richard Dyer MacCann, *The People's Films: A Political History of U.S. Government Motion Pictures* (New York: Hastings House, 1973).

⁸³ There is a brief mention in the NARA catalog of MacCann's writing credit for a USIS Korea animated film titled *Ask Me!* (306.420), which "follows 'Jones'--a character meant to represent humankind--and portrays man's political development." catalog.archives.gov/id/47198.

⁸⁴ Mohammad Issari, "A Historical and Analytical Study of the Advent and Development of Cinema and Motion Picture Productions in Iran (1900–1965)" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1979).

⁸⁵ Hamid Naficy, *Iran Media Index* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984). As Issari had shaped Naficy's work, so too did Naficy shape Issari's work. For two of their later publications, see Mohammad Ali Issari, *Cinema in Iran: 1900–1979* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1989); and Hamid Naficy, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema, vol. 2, The Industrializing Years, 1941–1978* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011). Issari offers more personal detail of his decade-long involvement with USIS Iran during the 1950s in a coauthored book with Doris A. Paul, *A Picture of Persia* (Exposition Press, 1977).

⁸⁶ In addition to Fiering's piece, another fascinating example is William Bayer's interview in "Films in Vietnam," 46–80.

⁸⁷ Two of the more noteworthy examples: Joseph McBride, "Drums along the Mekong," *Sight and Sound* 41, no. 4 (1972), 213–6; and Arthur Unger, "'Let Poland Be Poland'--Is the Program Really That Bad? Closer Look At an International Special Finds Some Unpredicted Meaning," *Christian Science Monitor*, February 5, 1982, [csmonitor.com](https://www.csmonitor.com).

⁸⁸ See Bosley Crowther, "Films for Democracy: Why Not Home Release of USIA Output?," *New York Times*, October

7, 1963, 113; and “For All Those to See: Fine USIA Film on Kennedy Should Have Domestic Release,” *New York Times*, November 22, 1964, X1.

⁸⁹ In addition to Issari, *An Historical and Analytical Study*, see, for example, Nejat Kurdoglu, “A Survey of the Motion Picture Industry in Turkey, 1897–1955” (master’s thesis, University of Southern California, 1956).

⁹⁰ For example, see Mahmoud Ahmed Masoud, “The United States Information Program in the Middle East and South Asia” (master’s thesis, The American University, 1963); and Gurpartap Singh Bawa, “The United States Information Agency Organizations and Operations in India” (master’s thesis, The American University, 1964).

⁹¹ Given limited access to USIA materials, these dissertations and theses often rely on congressional documents and hearings and contemporary journalism to contextualize their analyses. While some of the sources on which they relied may be available to us today, there is value in the researchers’ selection and synthesis of the historical data and anecdotes.

⁹² To round out the already fully cited texts (Cull, Parry-Giles, Dizard, and Osgood), we can add here Gregory Tomlin, *Murrow’s Cold War: Public Diplomacy for the Kennedy Administration* (Lincoln: Potomac Books, University of Nebraska Press, 2016).

⁹³ For more details on the difficult research process during this earlier era of USIA scholarship—namely the limitations of access and the approach to interviews—refer to our conversation with Nick Cull in this issue.

⁹⁴ See Horne, “Experiments in Propaganda.” In addition to her forthcoming book to be published later this year, see Yuka Tsuchiya, “The Atoms for Peace USIS Films: Spreading the Gospel of the ‘Blessing’ of Atomic Energy in the Early Cold War,” *International Journal of Korean History* 9, no. 2 (2014), 107–35; and her coauthored book (in Japanese), Yuka Tsuchiya and Yoshimi Shun’ya, *Occupying Eyes, Occupying Voices: CIE/USIS Films and VOA Radio* (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 2012).

⁹⁵ Melinda M. Schwenk-Borrell, “Selling Democracy: The United States Information Agency’s Portrayal of American Race Relations, 1953–1976” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2004); and Carol B. Schwalbe, “Jacqueline Kennedy and Cold War Propaganda,” *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 49, no. 1 (2005), 111–27.

⁹⁶ In addition to Longo, “Between Documentary and Neorealism,” see Regina Longo, “Marshall Plan Films in Italy, 1948–1955” (PhD diss, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2012).

⁹⁷ For example, see Han Sang Kim, “Cold War and the Contested Identity Formation of Korean Filmmakers: On *Boxes of Death* and Kim Ki-yong’s USIS Films,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 14, no. 4 (2013), 551–63; and Sangjoon Lee, *Cinema and the Cultural Cold War: US Diplomacy and the Origins of the Asian Cinema Network* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020).

⁹⁸ In addition to Real, “Hidden History,” and Gharabaghi, “Syracuse Mission to Iran,” see Sueyoung Park-Primiano, “South Korean Cinema between the Wars: Screening Resistance and Containment under U.S. Intervention and Influence, 1945–1960” (PhD diss., New York University, 2015); Ayesha Jülide Etem, “A Transnational Communication Network Promoting Film Diplomacy: The Case of Turkey and the USA, 1950–1986,” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 41, no. 2 (2020), 292–316; Lotte Hoek, “Mirrors of Movement: *Aina*, Afzal Chowdhury’s Cinematography and the Interlinked Histories of Cinema in Pakistan and Bangladesh,” *Screen* 57, no. 4 (2016), 488–95; Gharabaghi, “‘American Mice Grow Big!’; and Bret Vukoder, “Filmic Aesthetics of War, Policy, and ‘Truth’ in the Motion Pictures of the United States Information Agency” (PhD diss., Carnegie Mellon University, 2020).

⁹⁹ For example, see Criss Austin, “Protecting Your Past—It’s What We Do Here: The Preservation and Restoration of *The March*,” *Unwritten Record*, August 22, 2013, unwritten-record.blogs.archives.gov/2013/08/22/; Heidi Holmstrom, “Animatics and Anti-Communism: Payout Ngaokrachang Animates Hanuman for the USIA,” *Unwritten Record*, May 15, 2019, unwritten-record.blogs.archives.gov/2019/05/15/; and Audrey Amidon, “‘Tales from the Hoja’: Marionettes with a Message,” *Unwritten Record*, October 16, 2019, unwritten-record.blogs.archives.gov/2019/10/16/.

¹⁰⁰ These recent publications in film and media studies addressing USIA/S motion pictures have been enriched by several emergent subfields. Publications in nontheatrical film, “useful cinema,” transnational and postcolonial cinemas, archival studies, and documentary studies have been a tremendous boon to USIA research. In particular, the coauthored works of Haidee Wasson and Lee Grieveson (e.g., *Cinema’s Military Industrial Complex*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018) extensively detail military investment in film operations and thoroughly establish a disciplinary genealogy to film studies. Zoë Druick’s research (*Projecting Canada: Government Policy and Documentary Film at the National Film Board*, Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007) provides key framework for conceptualizing policy within the documentary. Jonathan Kahana’s comprehensive *The Documentary Film Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), which touches on USIA filmmaking, gives essential and accessible context to the study of the documentary form. Anna McCarthy’s work (e.g., *The Citizen Machine: Governing by Television in 1950s America*, New York: New Press, 2013) delineates government investment in and the corporatization of documentaries, employing apt historical and theoretical analogs for study of USIA. And Dan Streible, Devin Ogeron, and Marsha Ogeron (*Learning with the Lights Off: Educational Films in the United States*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) generatively historicize and theorize the educational film in the United States, bringing scholarly attention to this crucial documentary format.

¹⁰¹ Excavated Footage Conference, Ajou University, South Korea, March 11–12, 2021, footage.ajou.ac.kr/home; and Films of State: A Conference on the Use and Study of Government Film, University of Maryland Cinema and Media Studies Program and the National Archives and Records Administration, April 7–9, 2021, filmsofstate.wordpress.com. To see videos from all the panels at the Films of State Conference, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9-JTfK3rrc&list=PLugwVCjzrJsWpO9pPM0sQbOYIxQsSIQw3>.

¹⁰² See the project website (mediaecology.dartmouth.edu/wp/). See further details in Mark Williams, “Networking Moving Image History: Archives, Scholars, and the Media Ecology Project” in *The Arclight Guidebook to Media History and the Digital Humanities*, Charles R. Acland and Eric Hoyt, eds., Falmer: REFRAAME Books, 2016.

¹⁰³ See the project website (distantviewing.org). See further details in Taylor Arnold and Lauren Tilton, “Distant Viewing: Analyzing Large Visual Corpora,” *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* (2019), 1–14.

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