

your copies, sick

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE AUDIO-VISUAL
INSTRUCTION AT THE STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
AT BUFFALO

SMJ: It is March 7, 1977. Dr. Stanley Czurles, Professor, Former Director of Art Division and the first Director of the Audio-Visual Education program at the State University College at Buffalo will trace the origin and development of the audio-visual program on this campus.

CZURLES: You know Sister, as we came in here and I passed the tables of students with earphones and others with all kinds of taping equipment and television it made me realize what was here when I came 46 years ago. It was before television, and the 35mm camera wasn't around, but, there was radio. The 35mm camera photography altered the entire system of doing slides and films. In 1931, believe it or not, the schools didn't believe it or not, the schools didn't have all this equipment. It was mainly just books and talking. The city of Buffalo was one of the most advanced because it had a collection of lantern slides. Some of the schools had lantern in the science department, geology department, and sometimes in the art department for history. That was about the extent of the audio-visual materials. Today, with all this equipment here, it might be hard for anyone listening to

this to go back to and realize what this college has gone through in terms of developing the audio-visual resources here.

SMJ: Doctor Czurles, before you go on, I wanted to comment that in reviewing the history of the United States, you will remember that during the 1930's, it was during the depression, and I think a college that developed any kind of program performed a monumental task. Please tell us about that.

CZURLES: I can tell you the whole history of how we struggled through that period because our very existence depended on it. My personal involvement in this came from the fact that I did come here to develop an Art Division. The philosophy which I brought with me differed from the common philosophy where the arts were primarily the fine arts of drawing and painting. I came here to develop the concept that we all live in the visual world, and that there are many ways in which the visual affects us. At the time, outside the arts, photography was one element that I felt needed to be developed as a part of the art program. First of all, if you say something is beautiful to look at, or there is a beautiful painting, no amount of words will ever describe that. You must come to see the thing or picture, so I felt that an essential ingredient of art program would be the development of photography. The other thing was that at that time , I was doing theater design here. We would spend months and months developing a set for a play, and when it was over, it was pulled apart. I began to find it necessary to court the theater, even though it was only black and white. Another thing that I felt should be part of an artist's

training is that she/he should have a way to gather resources other than note taking and sketching. Photography was an essential, first of all in terms of a person being able to record something from which you could get inspiration. So, I say the most common form of art is how we respond to things, how we see it is photography. I felt that an art department should be responsible for photography as something to be taught to people because they are going to be using it. One of the first things that happened after I came to Buffalo was that I was asked to teach a couple of photography clubs. I told them I really didn't know much about cameras and films. But, they told me that they could tell me everything I would want to know about cameras and film. The one thing they couldn't do was take good pictures. The emphasis was that the essence of good photography is very much how you compose. Composition, whether painting or photography, became important, and I began to be known in the field of photography. As we worked along here at the college, I also became much more interested in motion pictures and radio. In 1937, I put in a request about the possibility of motion pictures in education which was recorded in our records. That it takes you back to where the State Education Department was beginning to consider radio and motion pictures as a tool of instruction. As time went on, the 35mm camera came into use and immediately began to popularize making your own slides. Up to that time, it was an elaborate process so that making pictures first in black and white and then eventually in color was much easier for the average person. As the creation of making one's own

slides came in, the Buffalo school system began putting in smaller size slides. Then the world war came and here was the first time that all kinds of automatic audio-visual aids were brought in to accelerate teaching and learning, especially for self-learning. The Army and Navy were also developing motion pictures, not documentaries, but especially how through a motion picture they could affect attitude. This is where I became very much interested. I received the opportunity to go to the Samson Training Center and talk with the people who were developing the films. How do you get a man, for example, not to go on an absence without a leave? How do you get a man to be very serious when he is standing guard in a camp where there is no chance of anyone coming there at that time? Motion pictures and other aids to help change or develop attitudes become a very essential part because, as soon as you do that, you are in the theater of arts, because that arts deal with not what things are but how we responded to them. When I came back from the University of Iowa in 1942, I was pushing this, but nothing was happening at that college. One day President Rockwell came back from a big meeting in Chicago all excited because the educators were talking about visual aids in terms of college education. He knew what I had been doing in the field and called me in to ask if I wanted to work on that area. I immediately began to organize the college toward an audio-visual program. I told them, I didn't want to do the typical thing of you asking for a film equipment and show the film. The audio-visual is to be an essential part of education. The faculty first, and then

the student, must learn to use the equipment so that they will not have to depend on somebody bringing the materials in. Secondly, I wanted the audio-visual center to have an in and out flow. Dr. Rockwell agreed, and we formed a group that was representative in audio-visual from every department. They had the responsibility of feeding requirements, ideas and suggestions to us, and we, in turn, received all kinds of new ideas and information. We began to have departments conscious within their own meetings as to what they can do with audio-visual education.

SMJ: Did you have meetings with these representatives?

CZURLES: We had constant meetings. The next thing I said was that no one was allowed to ask for a piece of equipment to be brought in by someone else. I set up a series of workshops where faculty member who wanted to use a piece of equipment came and learned how to use it. There was a slide projector, a motion picture. The idea was that the teacher was doing it, as part of teaching, the student should feel that he was a part of it also. It worked beautifully.

SMJ: Did you have a budget for each department or was it just an overall budget?

CZURLES: I don't remember that. I presume it was centralized because we were very small at that time, and the amount of equipment was very little. I remember the first meeting at which I was introduced to the faculty as the audio-visual man and I gave a demonstration. The faculty was so big then that we had to meet in one classroom. I took the film on how an airplane flies

assuming that most people had no idea of how one actually does fly. I showed them this film and proved to them that within minutes although they had been totally ignorant of this, they knew something about why the wings were structured in a certain way, how a plane turns, etc. This showed them how a device of this kind could very quickly teach something. That really sold the faculty on audio-visual aids. The committee began to be very effective and in 1943, I was appointed Director Of Audio-Visual Education. At that time, I was also Assistant Professor of Art Education. They gave us a little office in Rockwell Hall at the end of the staircase. It was almost a six by eight room from which we operated. One day, in the paper, I saw that the federal government was going to help education begin to use audio-visual materials, especially since it was so successful in the military services. The American Council on Education was given a grant to establish commission on the use of motion pictures, and it said that they would work in several areas. I didn't wait for them I wrote immediately to the chairman, Dr. Mary May, director of the Institute of Human Relations at Yale University and very strongly suggested above all, the art area should be the one that should be studied. We were the one area that was totally dependent on the visual. I very roughly outlined what I thought was important, and I was delighted to receive a letter from him saying It sounded like something that was possible. He wanted me to develop an outline that something was possible. He wanted me to develop an outline that he could present to the commission to see whether they thought

art might be one of the areas. They had already decided on two areas. One was mathematics and the other was geography. I offered a list of suggestions for motion pictures to teach the fundamentals of the visual arts. Eventually, there was an allocation made for there to be an art committee. Let me read from the statement, the purpose of this original council. The commission on Motion Pictures was created by the American Council on Education in February, 1944. It was made possible by a grant of \$125,000 to the American Council by the Motion Picture Association of America. It was the motion picture industry that anticipated that there might be good business in it. The purpose of the commission was to determine the curriculum areas in which there was a critical need for educational films. It was a further objective of the commission to develop educational specifications, film treatments, and in some cases, even scripts for these needed films. All this material developed by the commission for the guidance of educational film producers was to be distributed free of charge to all interested educators. The film industry became very much interested because they saw the possibilities. Our committee was established after they had reviewed this material and work was started. The members of this art committee were selected to represent various art organizations that existed at that time. The chairman of the committee was Dr. Thralkal, who was the superintendent of schools in Montclair, New Jersey. He was also superintendent under Miss Margaret Mythius, who was director of art. She was a member of the committee. I was a member

representing our college here in New York State. Miss Marian Miller was the Director of Art in the Denver public schools. The southwest was also included. Miss Marian Quinn was supervisor in Elizabeth, New Jersey and Mr. Vincent Roy was Chairman of Art Education at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York. The committee worked from 1946 until 1948 in developing a series of 22 possible educational filmstrips and motion pictures.

SMJ: Then you're on a national committee?

CZURLES: This was the first committee in the nation that gave any consideration to the production of art materials that was in films and slides. We had our problems as usual as to what was most important. After a while, it was all resolved, we had a series of materials that were immediately being used by the motion picture industry. For example, I was asked by one of the companies - Teaching Films Inc. of New York City - to produce a script for filmstrip in motion pictures on the subject of perspective. We did it then, but I and many others stopped doing it after a while because they were paying us only \$50.00 for a script, and the time involved was tremendous.

SMJ: It must of been very time consuming.

CZURLES: It was tremendously time consuming because we had to conceive new possibilities. That is why I didn't go into it any further. This was at least a start, and thereafter, various people were hired especially in filmstrips on the production of materials for the field. In the meantime I resigned from being Director of Audio-Visual Education because in 1946, I became Director of the

Art Division. Although the president encouraged me to carry on both, I felt that I could not do justice to the two areas because both of them were in the stage where rapid new development were taking place. In the meantime, audio-visual activities at the colleges increased. In 1947, I was allowed to bring in another person who would be the Director of Audio-Visual Education. The man was Dr. Norman Truesdale. Also in 1947, for the first time , we began to teach photography. If anyone could ever find it again, in the basement of Rockwell Hall there is a small room in which the various electric meters make connections with the wiring coming in. This was the little basement room in which we set up the first photography studio. That was the beginning, and Norm started to teach photography. It became part of the art program offered here. As we were doing this, we became very much interested in television because it was first coming out. Among other things, I became concerned, as I am today, about public television being educational and leading to creativity and activity. At this point, in 1977, the papers are full of concerns of what television does in terms of violence, and what it does in terms of children sitting and doing nothing. We became involved in television with WBEN and began to explore educational possibilities on television. In 1949, we did a television show over WBEN which was rather historic. The Art Education club of the college here held an annual art auction of the contributed art works. The money from that was used as scholarship money for the students that were taking art education because, at that time, the students were the only ones who paid the

tuition. We wanted to publicize the event on television, and we also wanted to try to do it in such a way that people became educated about the value of an art work at home is and how it was made. We put on a production in which we had an artist modeling clay so that when we initiated selling a piece of sculpture we then, in turn, explained how it was made. We had another one in which when a painting came up or a drawing came up, there was someone who was demonstrating it. We also showed how nice it was in a home. The idea was to encourage people to come to the auction. The idea was also to make people appreciate how these things were made and see how they might look in their homes. It went over very well, and by 1951 WBEN began to put on a program - Fun to Learn. This encompassed many areas beside the art field. Here again was a chance for us to try a kind of philosophy about television production which is almost approached by Sesame Street. We were getting \$25, a production. I think Sesame Street probably gets in the range of five figures. One thing I learned from studying the government films, when they were trying to affect people, is that you have to establish a bridge of interest between what was shown and the viewer. At the time we lucky enough to have prime time. It's usually between 4 and 5 o'clock in the afternoon or from 5 o'clock on. It was good, because that was the time children were usually home. We wanted to do through television was to have children become active and creative. We selected in such a way that there was definitely one superior and at the other end one who was very poor. This was anyone who was watching could fit

in and relate. We also had one child who was black, oriental or some other minority.

SMJ: Boys and girls?

CZURLES: Yes, boys and girls, and the ages were also scattered. We prepared ahead of time little booklets that parents could ask for and which told what kind of activity would be carried on a certain day. I think that a quarter million were finally sent out. It also told what kind of materials they should have ready. Since this was also the time when girl scout and boy scout groups would meet, group activities were involved. It worked beautifully. For example, when we were going to have them make little puppets, the children were told what materials to have beforehand. Dr. Howard Conant (who was the director of the program, when it opened) would be on stage with these five children discussing what they were already doing. They usually started a few minutes ahead of time. Nothing was preplanned, so as the show came on a child would be telling what he was doing in a very early stage of development and another would be at a higher stage. It was presented in such a way that the participants could listen and then do their own things also. As the program progressed, you saw how the children built up their projects. Most of the time they didn't finish, but they were on there way. The children who were observing were invited to send in what they had done. Part of the program was to show what had come in from the audience. We had a marvelous replies from parents and groups that this was really an educational program. You can see it is very different from the problems we

face today.

SMJ: Weren't the children self-conscious about being in front of the T.V. cameras?

CZURLES: No, because they were hardly aware of the television camera being there. Nowadays, they face people directly in front of the cameras, but on our show they were working at their easels and the T.V. cameras moved around. This way, sometimes there was a back view of the child and sometimes a side or front view. Also, engaging the child in conversation made the child forget why the camera was there. The sad thing about the show was, that it was during prime time and eventually it was sold to commercials. I don't know what airs at that time now, but we were pushed out of the picture. I don't remember if it was changed to another time, or if it just faded out. After a while, it did start to become difficult to prepare a program week after week for only \$25. When I say \$25. I am talking about investing in materials as well as time. That was still the best program for children. I say in spite of Sesame Street and everything else, because in the others the children just observe; they don't participate. Later on, I don't have the exact date, a comparable program was picked up and it was headed by Mr. Grover also from our college at the time, but again it was sold to commercials. I very much regret that because that is what is happening now. We are fed what industry wants us to believe, and it is mainly in terms of making sales, not education.

SMJ: In reading through the back issues of the record, I

recall coming across an article about one of the professors who died. Did Mr. Grover die while he was doing this, or was it Dr. Conant?

CZURLES: Neither, Howard Conant left and became Director of the Art Division at a different university and Mr. Grover left us to go to Moorhead State University in Kentucky because they were building up an art department. With the experience he had here, he did a perfect job down there as well as I think continued some of this kind of work. That kind of put an end of being able to do educational television for the public. In the summer, I still did some programs. The one that I was personally involved in was Crafts. Here again my philosophy was not to sell them anything, But I had a radio and a television family. Each time we would appear, we would be at the beach, at the woods or someplace out in nature. What we showed was how we used the materials that were available at each place. If we were on the beach, we took the sand, the driftwood and the rocks. IN the woods, we had a variety of leaves and trees and so forth. We showed how these materials were then turned into something which was creative. We again got an entire family participate. I had a very young child, a teenager and the parents themselves so there was a full scope. The idea was that when you are outdoors someplace, you can use the materials around you in order to be creative. Norman Truesdale eventually came back to teaching, so in 1955 Dr. Paul Smay became the Director of Audio-Visual Education. At that point, I separated the responsibilities of the art department entirely from audio-visual

education. The reason was very simple. Audio-visual had now become a big business of renting films, developing things for colleges, and it was no longer strictly education. It was a big service. In 1957 the Rockwell Hall library, which is now the Burchfield Center, was empty because we received a brand new library building.

SMJ: The first library?

CZURLES: Yes, the first library- not the present one. The empty area was big open space. It was subdivided, and at the time, we also had studios there for speech and for radio production. By this time, the audio-visual department got into production of materials for people. Also, the speech and theater groups were established, and they were doing speech for not only the stage but for radio productions as well. That's how a center for audio-visual production came to being. In 1957 Dr. Smay left to become a Dean at another college, and he was replaced by Dr. Herman Trubeau. From that point on, I had less and less direct contact with their activities, but they began to expand us into all kinds of production. In 1955, backing up a little, we began to plan a new Fine and Industrial arts building. This was one of the first buildings which was planned with the idea that henceforth electronic equipment of all kinds would be used in classes and so on. Let me tell you briefly some things that were put into that building which you would find there. First of all, the entire building was wired so that eventually it would be possible to broadcast from any shop or studio. If we wanted to show somebody

doing ceramics or auto mechanics it was wired, we didn't have to use equipment. In planning the auditorium, up in the projection booth, we built many times the size of a regular one, we set it up to be the broadcasting headquarters. It was the control room. The auditorium stage was partly justified that this could be our broadcasting headquarters studio, with the lights and the controls. I then planned the first complete audio-visual room. It was automatic. The philosophy here that in this room we could use every kind of teaching procedure that existed. On the wall there was a large electrical control panel and there were to be automatic projectors at the back of the room. If for example, I were teaching ceramics I could present a slide projector and motion picture projector and at a certain point turn them on and show a Greek face and a contemporary face on different sides. I also could show motion pictures of ceramics being made. The room is planned so that the lights were set up into the ceiling and there were dimmers controlling each set so we could dim it down and the light could still shine down on each students desk but not interfere with the projection on the screen. Then in order to show actual ceramics, on one wall there is a whole series of glass ceramics and controls in a panel so that if I wanted to show a certain ceramic I would dim the lights, and turn the light on in the case and the students could see a particular area of ceramics and I could keep changing the lights. On the opposite wall there are 10 vertical panels with a spotlight on them. Again, if I wanted to show posters or photographs, I could project them onto that. In the

floor, I built a service pit. You could take the metal plate off and if you wanted hot or cold water, gas, electricity, compressed air, or if you wanted to have that group at that time see what was going on in the ceramics studio you could plug in the television unit there and the projector in the other studio itself and have it shown. It was the first completely equipped audio-visual room. Behind the projection room, there is another large room, which is now the students art gallery. This was the audio-visual resource room so the faculty could come in and get equipment, slides or anything else. Put in into the projection room and have the whole thing work automatically. I don't know who ever had another one like it. It was envisioned as a room in which every strategy could be used individually or combined.

SMJ: You must have a lot of guests come to see this.

CZURLES: We had people coming from all over the country. There are now many art buildings patterned after ours. Also included was the concept of the automatic controls which they have now moved to the stand itself.

SMJ: Will you go into more detail when you talk about the building?

CZURLES: Yes, but I wanted to bring it up here first because it was the first room made that way. Upton Hall was opened in 1960 and shortly after that I was not involved in it any more. But, the University and Gene Steffan began to plan the communications center as we now have it.

SMJ: Gene Steffan had been here for quite a while through,

right?

CZURLES: Yes, Gene Steffan was first an art education major, then got into industrial arts. From there he went into education. Gene Steffan was teaching a course for the industrial arts men, and he was doing some extension teaching at the Alexandria public schools and others because they were reaching out and teaching audio-visual education in other places. I believe Gene Steffan took over officially in 1959. From that point on, the production element began to increase. The communications building was open in 1966. The very important part was that now there was a full time staff for production. Production of every kind of audio-visual material which people wanted- from individual photographs to tape recording and especially the production of television programs.

SMJ: Is that the building called the silo?

CZURLES: Yes, it was called the silo especially when it was first built because people don't realize that the square in the front of the building is probably 12 feet above what was the grade level then. It did stand very tall and was circular. There was objection to that by the faculty, because the university could no longer afford classes of 25 students. Part of that building was an intentional structure built so that there would be no excuse for not holding classes of 100 or 200 students at a time. A lot of the things we planned for the audio-visual room in Upton Hall were incorporated and additional improvements were made in the projection room. By that time, the entire field had expanded tremendously.

SMJ: That building, as I understand it, is also used for meetings.

CZURLES: As I look at the room that was used for broadcasting and which was about 6ft by 8ft and contained 8 units, I think about the time when 35mm cameras were not in use. That is the story, and I planned to file with the archives information on most of these highlights and some additional things that we'll add as we go through the records and find what is there.

SMJ: Thank you, Dr. Czurles!