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## A MILLION PICTURES: MAGIC LANTERN SLIDES IN THE HISTORY OF LEARNING

Sarah Dellmann and Frank Kessler (eds)

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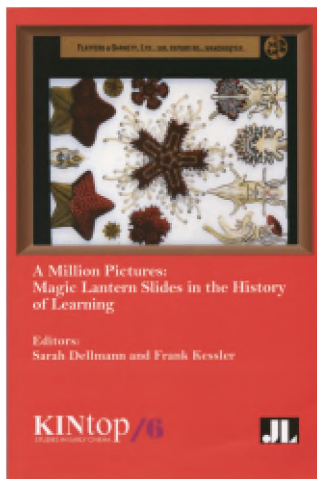
This well-presented volume, just published officially (August 2020), is the culmination of *A Million Pictures* (2015–2018) – a project well known to *TML* readers – and reflects the presentations at the project's 2017 conference in Utrecht (see *TML* 13). The overall aim of the project was to increase understanding and improve access to magic lantern slides through taking a cultural heritage approach to their study.

Among the authors, a number of MLS members have contributed to the book and some of the topics will be familiar. However this is a well-illustrated potpourri of many different aspects of magic lantern slides, drawing on expertise from Europe and around the world. While a few contributions may be considered fairly 'academic' and philosophical, many are accessible and a 'good read'.

Covering such a wide range of aspects of magic lantern slides must have set the editors quite a challenge in organising the contents. The book is helpfully divided into sections which, on the whole, work well, enabling the reader to focus on different facets – such as their history, educational context and archive practices. Overall, it is very encouraging to see this revived interest in magic lantern slides from researchers, exhibitors and organisations whose collections have managed to survive despite decades of neglect – in some cases, like the Manchester Geographical Society (MGS), through the swift action of one individual.

With 26 essays in the book, it is impossible to review them all, so this is a highly subjective selection. In the prologue Ine van Dooren, in the persona of a slide from Bamforth's *The Little Match Girl*, takes us on the 127-year journey from Holmfirth to the *Lucerna* database – again a tale of narrow survival. Sarah Dellmann analyses some of the Max Skladanowsky *Projection für Alle* travel sets. Martyn Jolly looks at the magic lantern slides in shows from around 1835 onwards in Australia

using newspaper reports. Many present-day showpeople will recognise the practical issues described – although, thankfully, we rarely have to deal with "brawls in the stalls" or the fear of missiles.



Nadezhda Stanulevich tells the story of Prokudin-Gorskii's colour slides of Russia (1905–15) using three exposures (blue, green and red filters), reminiscent of Martin Gilbert's demonstration at the October 2019 MLS meeting (see *TML* 21). Marcia Vilarigues and Vanessa Otero describe the development of Winsor & Newton's material for painting on glass during the 19th century (see also *TML* 22). Artemis Willis looks in detail at one slide, 'Flashlight of Wild Moose in the Maine Forest', from the Keystone 600 set, to reveal the thinking behind this famous brand from the USA that encouraged 'active learning' through images. While concentrating on a fascinating educational magic lantern board game Machiko

Kusahara gives a very good summary of the development of the magic lantern in Japan. The history, significance and content of various slides is highlighted in essays on the following collections: Chinese missionary slides (held at the Hong Kong Baptist University), the Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane (held at the History Museum, Philadelphia), and, in the UK, the Royal Geographical Society, the British Association for the Advancement of Science, the Royal Albert Memorial Museum (Exeter) and Manchester Geographical Society. The last two are compared and contrasted in an essay by Richard Crangle exploring their different objectives and circumstances.

Two essays, by Daniel Pitarch and Angel Quintana and by Jordi Pons, focus on the Museu del Cinema in Girona, Catalonia – the first on their collection and documents and the second on setting up the *Light!* Exhibition in 2017 (see *TML* 12). Nele Wynants also highlights a modern exhibition featuring the magic lantern – Sarah Vanagt's *Showfish*. With this level of interest, imaginative presentation and adaptation, the future for the magic lantern looks bright.

The book is good value at the price and contains a number of 'gems' that most magic lantern enthusiasts would welcome in their libraries – both print and e-book versions are available. Altogether it is an impressive record of how well the *Million Pictures* project made progress towards its ambitious targets.

Mary Ann Auckland