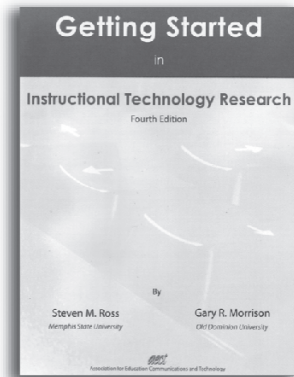




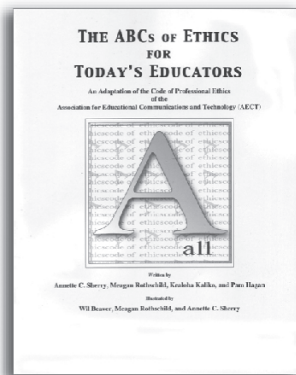
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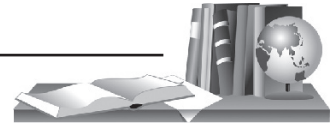
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The History Corner



Can the Old Technology of the Argus C3 "Brick" Withstand the Test of Time?

By Pamela A. Wicks

Argus cameras played an important part in the history of photography in the 20th century. Charles Verschoor, president of the International Radio Corporation, later known as Argus Cameras, saw the German made Leica 35mm camera in 1934 and decided that an affordable version of the camera could be made from plastic. Verschoor, along with Gustave Fassin, designed the first Argus camera (Kekatos, 2006).

Different models of the Argus, such as at A, C3, 21, C4, and C20, were manufactured between 1936 and 1966 ("About Argus," 2006). The camera initially sold for \$9.95 but with sales topping 30,000 units, the price, including a leather case, was raised to \$12.50 (Lahue & Bailey, 1972). The model A brought the 35mm format into prominence in the United States (Lahue & Bailey).

The Argus C3, first sold in 1938, was known as the "brick" because of its shape (M. Chait, personal email, September 28, 2006). The United States Army was the biggest user of this model, which remained the best selling camera in the world for almost three decades ("About Argus," 2006, para. 3). Durability, along with its beautiful color images, helped maintain the camera's popularity. The C3 model experienced greater success than any other 35mm camera, selling over 2 million in the 28 years it was in production (Lahue & Bailey, 1972).

Kuhlman (1940) proposed the use of the "American Argus" to preserve important documents and make information available outside libraries. His idea proved beneficial

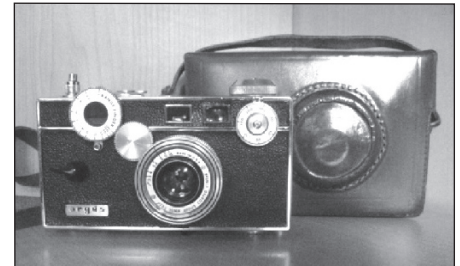


Figure 1. Argus C3 with Leather Case

for educators because journals and information needed by scholars would be preserved and made available for use at their convenience.

The Argus C3 continues to be used decades after production stopped. The Argus Collectors Group's website contains pictures collectors have taken with their "bricks". Argus cameras, including the C3, continue to take quality pictures 60+ years later. Photography professor Dr. Michael Sawdey stated that "no technology ever becomes obsolete" (personal communication, 2006). Members of the Argus Collectors Group would agree with him.

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