The Argus PA-200 Projector

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Projectors and cameras have a long history, from rudimentary pinhole cameras (O'Connor & Robertson, 2002) to the "Magic Lantern," considered by many to be the ancestor of modern projectors and cameras (Pfragner, 1974). In the United States, educational technology as a field grew during World War II, a time when projectors and training films gained prominence in preparing military personnel (Sattler, 1990).

The Argus PA-200 Projector was produced after the war, 1949-1957, by the Argus Company. At the time, it was considered a modern miniature projector for showing 35 mm slides, Bantam (828) transparencies, and film strips where extra brilliance was required. The manual instructed users in the following manner: "To use it for a slide projection, place it on a table or other stable support. Adjust the distance between the projector and the screen to achieve the desired picture sizes. As its name suggests, the PA-200 incorporates all of the success and popular features which have made Argus Projector the most popular in the photographic imaging industry" (Argus, 1949, p 1-2).

By the late 1950's, intense competition from foreign manufacturers offering better features at lower prices, was causing financial stress to Argus. In 1957, Argus was purchased by Sylvania Electric Products Co., and in 1959, Sylvania was acquired by GTE. Then in the early 1960s, Argus's new corporate owners essentially dumped the company onto Mansfield Industries—a Chicago photographic distributor and a much smaller company. By 1963, camera and projector production had stopped. Starting in 1967, Argus's corporate ownership turned over several more times, with the brand popping up in various guises. The era of US-designed and manufactured cameras had ended (Gabino, 2005).

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