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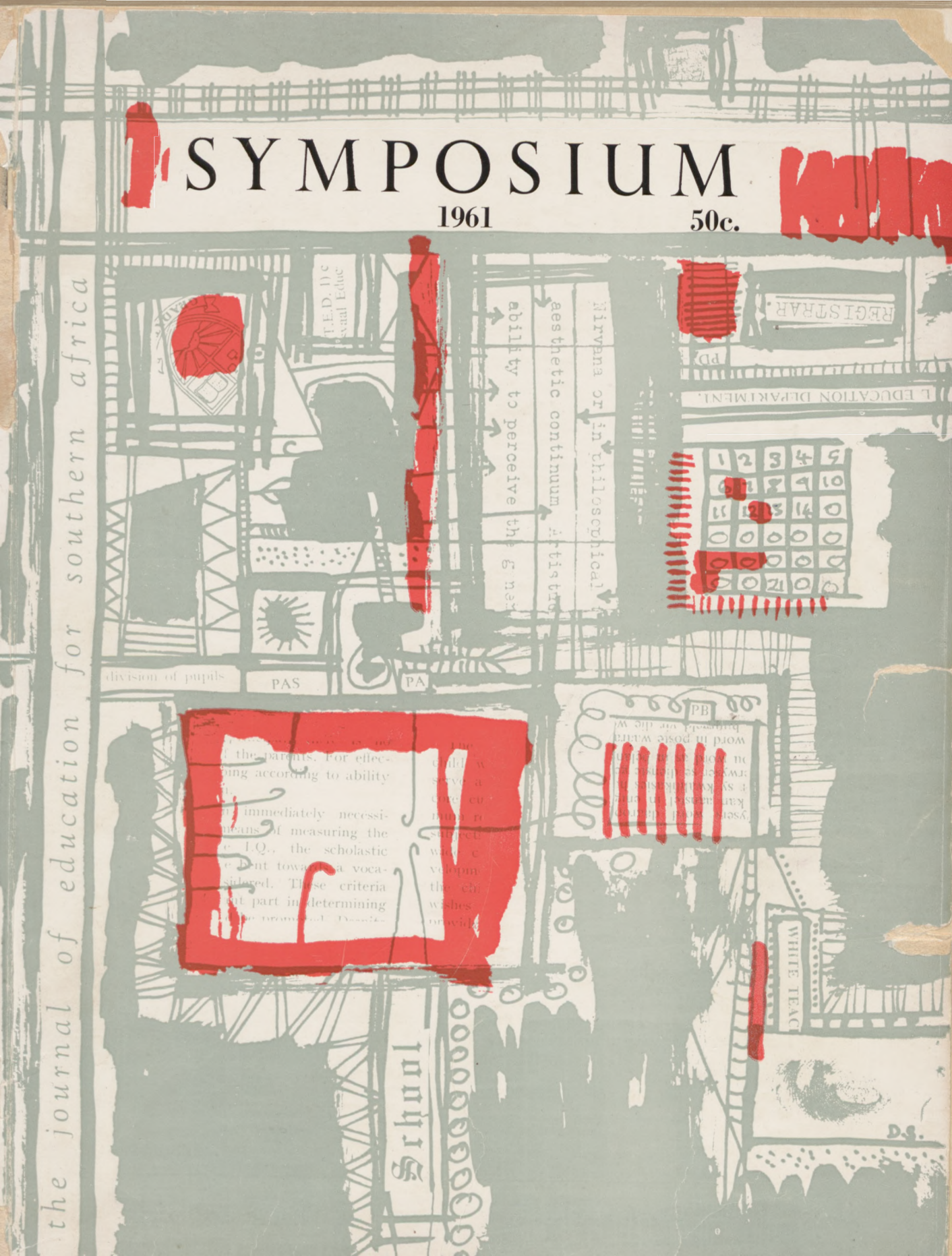
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Audio-Visual Aids

The use of visual aids as adjuncts to teaching is not new. Indeed, historical records show that some types were in use before the Renaissance — admittedly crude, but nevertheless helping the learning process by presenting facts in what Burt calls "concrete, pictorial and visible form."

The use of the time-honoured blackboard is first mentioned by Comenius in the "Orbis Pictis" in 1658, and although it is the most common Visual Aid in use today, the blackboard, in the hands of a good teacher is still one of the most effective aids to the learning process. The forerunner of today's filmstrip—and slide projectors —the old magic lantern—appeared during the fifteenth century. While more than four centuries had to elapse before the logical outcome of still-picture projection—the moving picture —became a reality. Many men have contributed to the development of the aids now in use—Newton and Daguerre, Paul and Eastman, to name a few, who were responsible for some of the optical, photographic and mechanical advances which, with further development in manufacturing processes, have made possible the wide range of projection-type aids at the disposal of today's teachers. The term "Visual Aids" does not only mean films and filmstrips; it embraces, apart from these, models, graphs, charts, pictures, book illustrations and diagrams, maps, Isotype and the powerful newcomer to the field — Television.

It is perhaps true to say that the film and the filmstrip, which have come into their own only during the last 25 years in schools, have advanced at a greater rate than the majority of the other aids in the same time. The 16mm. film with its special abilities of time expansion and compression, and the 35mm. filmstrip with its ability to record a great deal of information in a compact and convenient form, are of great value in teaching — the latter especially with the opportunities it affords for discussion during projection and the variations in approach and presentation face which are possible. It is not surprising, therefore, that the filmstrip is regarded by many teachers as being a more versatile and forceful teaching aid than the 16mm. film.

Almost every new audio-visual development is hailed by some enthusiasts as being in the nature of a panacea for our educational ills. The tape records, the 16mm. film and now television have each had their share of this acclaim; but this Journal would respectfully point out that all of these are *aids*. They are not going to replace teachers as is suggested from time to time in the press; they are not going to render obsolete the blackboard and the other traditional educational tools which are at present in use. The essence of good teaching is to be found in the interaction of teacher-pupil personalities. Audio-visual aids are of themselves inanimate and virtually useless without the imaginative skill of a classroom teacher; this applies to them all from the newest to the oldest.

And while remembering that, in many school subjects, a combined approach which makes use of the eye and the ear is likely to be more effective than either used singly, it must be acknowledged that the dominant force in the learning situation is not going to be an aid but a teacher.

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A Journal of Education for Southern Africa



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CONTENTS

	Page
Editorial	5
Education for Tomorrow's South Africa — *Professor P. V. Pretorius*	9
The Gifted Child and the need for Planners and Leaders — *S. M. Naudé*	17
The Quality of Matriculants — *W. J. Busschau*	25
The Matriculation Certificate and Performance at University — *N. Gourlay and R. Tunmer*	27
"That Damned Subject" — *H. Holmes*	31
Semantics for the High Schools — *F. Mayne*	37
The Wind that blew the Teacher's Hat off — *Donald McLean*	39
Isolation and Integration — *Professor David Munroe*	43
The Importance of the Community in African Education — *O. S. D. Mooki*	47
An Educational Blueprint — *Brian Rose*	49
Psychology and Art — *André Strauss*	55
The Evolution of Educational Handwork in the U.S.A. — *R. C. H. Taylor*	61
"My Heart leaps up when I behold a Rainbow in the Sky" — *W. Waldman*	65
Educational Administration: Its Character, Conflicts and Compromise — *R. F. Weaver*	67
Some Thoughts on Private School Education — *N. Westcott*	73
IF I HAD MY WAY:	
Mathematics Tug-of-War — *H. Crosley*	75
Social Studies — for Knowledge — *E. Duncan*	77
English Unconfined — *R. S. Fair*	78
With English in the Primary School — *V. E. Hanna*	79
Race Studies — for Citizenship — *S. H. Hartshorne*	80

CONTENTS

Page

IF I HAD MY WAY (continued):

Race Studies — for Understanding — *M. J. Malan* 81

The Race Studies Syllabus — *M. G. Marwick* 82

Social Studies — for Fun — *H. A. Noble* 83

English — for Taste — *L. Proctor* 84

English — for Speech — *J. Robinson* 85

The Teaching of Biology — *Alan G. Walpole, B.Sc.* 86

Social Studies — Much Ado About Nothing — *A "Parent"* 87

THE ENGLISH ACADEMY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA:

The Importance of English as a World Language — *A. Norman Jeffares* 90

The English Academy of Southern Africa — Opening Address — by the Chairman of the Steering Committee — *Dr. G. Knowles-Williams* 95

Examinations in English Language and Literature — *G. Knowles-Williams* 97

Falling Standards in English in Schools and Universities — *R. G. Macmillan* 102

Learning English in a Bilingual Country — *Professor E. G. Malherbe* 108

Liaison between Universities and Secondary Schools — *A. C. Partridge* 119

The Importance of English in the World of Commerce and Literature *A. Rodger Martin* 123

Literacy in English Among Non-Whites in South Africa — *S. Schiff* 130

Current Educational Research 134

Books Reviewed 139

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