

They Need You! Disability, Visual Culture, and the Poster Child, 1945-1980

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by

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## **DEDICATION**

For the complex, loving, and strong women of my family. You give me the courage to do the difficult things.

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My family have been my greatest cheerleaders, the ones who could see me at the finish line and beyond when I couldn't. I love you all. Sheila, thank you for your bottomless well of care and understanding. To my parents, JoAnne and Rand, thank you for your constant love and support as I set lofty goals and went after them. I cannot express what it means to know that I've made you proud. Dad, I never stopped reading and dreaming; thank you and I miss you. And to my love David, all the muchos.

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## ABSTRACT

THEY NEED YOU! DISABILITY, VISUAL CULTURE, AND THE POSTER CHILD,  
1945-1980

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*They Need You! Disability, Visual Culture, and the Poster Child, 1945-1980* examines the history of the national poster child—an official representative for both a disease and an organization—in post-World War II America. This dissertation argues that the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis/March of Dimes and Muscular Dystrophy Association’s poster child campaigns increased the visibility and understanding of physical disability in new ways by depicting disabled American children within their families and communities as full, if physically limited, citizens of the nation. The campaigns’ emphasis on curing disability and illness centered on a rhetoric of disease eradication, which through repetition became a dominant logic for health charities in the United States. The focus on disease eradication in poster child imagery promoted a narrow view of disease and disability as conditions to be overcome, and precluded political avenues and policies beyond medical research into a cure. Moreover, these

poster child campaigns contributed to broader shift toward viewing charitable donations as a consumable good through the establishment of annual rituals of philanthropy-as-civic participation.

This project is presented through the digital publishing platform Scalar in an alternate structure for the elements required of a historical dissertation—historiography, artifacts, data, analysis, citations. In particular, the digital presentation allows me to foreground the visual materials of study, both within my analysis and as project elements on their own. This approach surfaces sources rarely seen, like those centered on the organizations’ employees, the parents of poster children, and most crucially the poster children themselves.



## PROJECT OVERVIEW

By the mid-twentieth century, the imagery of children occupied a central place in American advertising. Representations of children and allusions to childhood denoted innocence and possibility, two powerful tropes that shaped how people envisioned their societies. Representations of physically disabled people, on the other hand, tended to show adults in institutions like hospitals and asylums. These institutional scenes lacked the same hopeful and positive connotations as the scenes of children, and visually situated physical disability within a medical context instead of the idyllic version of American life common in advertisements. While these sets of imagery—children and childhood and physical disability—largely followed separate lines of development in the first half of the twentieth century, they intersected in a new publicity campaign devised by health charities after World War II: the poster child.

Two health charities in particular pioneered, and left the strongest imprint on, poster child campaigns. Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Basil O'Connor established the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis (later the March of Dimes Foundation, NFIP/MOD) in 1938 so that "no victim of infantile paralysis, regardless of age, race, creed or color, shall go without care for lack of money."<sup>1</sup> Polio, a viral infection that can cause paralysis and in some cases death, affected thousands of people before the

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<sup>1</sup> Basil O'Connor in David Oshinky, *Polio: An American Story* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 65.

implementation of the Salk vaccine in the 1950s led to the gradual elimination of the disease in the US in 1979. Founded on June 6, 1950 by a “small group of parents of child victims in New York City of Muscular Dystrophy, as well as adult patients...dedicated to seeking scientific aid for their doomed youngsters,” the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) also quickly proved successful at educating the public and raising money for research into the genetic disease.<sup>2</sup>

Historian and disability rights activist Paul K. Longmore argues that the organizations’ guiding logic was that the only hope for the disabled people “lay in medical cures or medical and vocational rehabilitation. They needed to be fixed as individuals, on a case-by-case basis.”<sup>3</sup> To achieve these goals, both associations operated at two levels: a national headquarters based in New York and growing numbers of local chapters. Their fundraising and promotional campaigns also reflected this bifurcated structure, with the national organization orchestrating annual cross-country publicity tours and campaign materials, and the local chapters running community-based initiatives like the Mothers’ Marches and the firefighters’ “fill the boot” collection drives. Slogans like “They Need You!” and “Help Me, Too” framed the annual campaigns, cajoling Americans to donate generously to the organizations’ efforts to research cures and new medical therapies.

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<sup>2</sup> *Annual Report of Muscular Dystrophy Associations of America, Inc.*, 1954, page 2. At various times in the period of study the organization was known as the Muscular Dystrophy Association or the Muscular Dystrophy Association of America. For the sake of consistency, I use the first formulation throughout this project.

<sup>3</sup> Paul K. Longmore, “The Cultural Framing of Disability: Telethons as a Case Study,” *PMLA* 120:2 (2005): 505.

Increased mass media circulation, the maturation of mass philanthropy, and shifting perceptions of disability converged in the post-WWII era poster child campaigns. Instead of relying on established depictions of physical disability that showed patients receiving treatment in asylums and hospitals, the NFIP/MOD and the MDA established new promotional strategies and tactics to create and promote representations of disabled children that increasingly focused on themes of charity, consumption, family, and the nation. Today, one needs only to look at the grocery store, point-of-sale appeals featuring smiling children asking shoppers to donate an extra dollar or two to see how prevalent and resilient these connections between charity, consumption, and disability remain.

This dissertation examines the history of the national poster child—an official representative for both a disease and an organization—in post-World War II America. I argue that the NFIP/MOD and MDA’s poster child campaigns increased the visibility and understanding of physical disability in new ways by depicting disabled American children within their families and communities as full, if physically limited, citizens of the nation. The campaigns’ emphasis on curing disability and illness centered on a rhetoric of disease eradication, which through repetition became a dominant logic for health charities in the United States. The focus on disease eradication in poster child imagery promoted a narrow view of disease and disability as conditions to be overcome, and precluded political avenues and policies beyond medical research into a cure. Moreover, these poster child campaigns contributed to broader shift toward viewing charitable donations as a consumable good through the establishment of annual rituals of philanthropy-as-civic participation.

## **Analysis**

This project consists of four long-form pieces of writing, each composed of multiple sections. The first piece examines shifting ideas of charitable participation in the postwar era, and argues that the poster child campaigns played a central role in the ritualization of charity through the establishment of new charitable practices in the form of “seasons of giving.” From 1955 to 75, the peak of poster child campaign celebrity and efficacy, both organizations experimented with different kinds of fundraising imagery and rhetorical strategies to discover what motivated sustained investments of money and attention from middle and upper-class America. Their efforts coalesced around what Lillie Chouliaraki describes as “a move from an ethics of pity to an ethics of irony.”<sup>4</sup> Shifting representations of poster children, along with the accompanying rhetoric, facilitated this transition through visual materials that appealed to a common sense of civic participation through donations.

The second piece analyzes changes in representations of family in poster child imagery from 1950-1980, and argues that this imagery visually brought disability into communities and homes nationwide. By including family imagery in a range of configurations, the NFIP/MOD and MDA positioned their efforts as helping children and families. The limits of this help showed in the scrupulous attention to disease eradication and medical treatments, and a lack of substantive action to address issues of care and welfare for those children and families. Both organizations consistently promoted a medical model for understanding and addressing disability as something to be researched

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<sup>4</sup> Lillie Chouliaraki, *The Ironic Spectator: Solidarity in the Age of Post-Humanitarianism* (Polity Press, 2013), 3.

and cured, despite clear opportunities to either broaden their view or pivot altogether to a social model of understanding disability and society. The poster child campaigns thus appropriated the national mythos of the nuclear family to appeal broadly across the political spectrum, tapping into concerns over family and parenting to increase interest and donations.

Two case studies of poster child campaign efforts follow. One examines the short-lived black poster child campaigns run by Interracial Activities Director Charles Bynum at the NFIP from 1947-1960. Despite its short existence, the black poster child campaign, and the organizational structures and people that supported it, reveal the tough situation faced by those advocating for increased visibility for black Americans in particular and minority persons in general. In a clash of ideas about race, gender, class, and disability during the civil rights era, Bynum sought to fold black Americans into mainstream NFIP programs and materials. While the limits of white benevolence presented a constant challenge for Bynum, his allies at the NFIP, and local black communities, the campaigns created images and print materials that asserted the importance of black representation in public health education and fundraising campaigns.

The second case study examines a collaboration between the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York City and the NFIP/MOD on the 1949 polio poster competition and exhibit. Twenty-three prominent artists submitted artistic poster designs related to the polio experience in America and the program aims of the NFIP. The museum saw this project as an opportunity to increase attention to its role as an arbiter of art and culture through a public health issue. The NFIP hoped that the artists'

work would lend greater prestige to their visual materials, while better communicating the organization's view of the charity's programs and campaign participation as civic, and often patriotic, acts. Despite the project's modest achievements, I argue that the polio poster project helped the NFIP/MOD articulate its often scattershot agenda and values while honing its imagery. The project, on the other hand, allowed the museum to express its views of the role of art, both fine and commercial, in fostering civic participation through the consumption of artistic educational posters.

### **Research Questions and Methodologies**

This project is driven by the following overarching questions: How was physical disability depicted through the range of visual materials created for the poster child campaigns? How did poster children and their families shape the images and narratives of their lives and experiences in relation to the charities' goals and publicity efforts? How did these representations embody understandings of race, class, gender, and disability in the second half of the twentieth century, and how did these depictions shift over time? How does examining poster children and the imagery through which they came to be known enrich understanding of notions of childhood, charity, and the nation?

I have chosen to study polio and muscular dystrophy together, along with their respective charities, because both the NFIP/MOD and MDA drew on similar themes and strategies grounded in particular understandings of health, philanthropy, and community and the medical diagnosis of disability. Also, examining polio and muscular dystrophy simultaneously allows for discussions of how physical disability was often understood irrespective of diagnosis, reinforcing the importance of treating disability as

simultaneously a lived experience and social construction. It must be stressed, however, that despite similarities in production, representations of disability were never stable and monolithic.

Visual materials—primarily poster art and photographs, but also paintings, film and television footage—form the core sources for this study. My examination of the visual materials occurs at two levels: corpus analysis and close readings. For the corpus analyses, I examined the extant photographs and posters, of each organization separately and together to see what, if any, meaningful patterns in composition or design emerge by taking the imagery together. I performed close readings of a select number of images. I performed close readings of the images to the extent possible based on image quality. Many of the images that make up the project are of poorer quality (bad scans of poorly kept reproductions found in newspapers and black and white photographs of color posters), but enough visual information was discernable to consider how those images contributed to the broader corpus of poster child campaign imagery.

Roland Barthes' theory of two levels of meaning in images, the denotative (descriptive) and the connotative (culturally specific), informs my readings of the poster child imagery.<sup>5</sup> In addition, I agree with Martin Berger's view that an image's meanings are shaped by "the complex interaction of discourses - those that circulate invisibly in the common culture, others prompted by general themes of an artwork, and those arising

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<sup>5</sup> Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 17.

from the unique formal properties of the work.”<sup>6</sup> Taking these frameworks together, I examine the images at multiple levels—the historical contexts, the themes and tropes they express, and the discrete elements that make up the composition, design, color, etc.—to provide a sense of how artists and institutions depicted and understood physical disability in conversation with the possible interpretations made by their audiences.

I consulted the March of Dimes archives, located at the organization’s headquarters in White Plains, New York for several years prior to the archives’ closure at the end of 2015. Materials found there make up a significant part of my primary sources, including thousands of photographs, fundraising materials, internal memorandums, and correspondence with local chapters and the poster children’s families. The archives also hold a collection of documents related to Charles Bynum, the NFIP’s Director of Interracial Activities who campaigned vigorously for African American access to polio care and oversaw the African American poster child campaigns that ran from 1947 to 1960. I consulted documents at the MDA headquarters in Tucson, Arizona, specifically the annual reports and newsletters, published by the organization since its founding, as well as a number of photographs, slides, and other visual materials. The MDA has not employed an archivist for years and many of its holdings are uncatalogued and unavailable to researchers. I was unable to find and analyze internal organization documents to the same extent as I was able with the NFIP/MOD, resulting on the focus on NFIP/MOD in the two case-studies.

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<sup>6</sup> Martin Berger, *Sight Unseen: Whiteness and American Visual Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), 24.



The Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) has records related to the poster competition and exhibit jointly organized by the NFIP in 1949, including the fourteen original submissions and reviews of the works. Additional repositories consulted include: the National Archives in College Park, Maryland; the National Library of Medicine in Bethesda, Maryland; the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.; the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City, New York; and the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina Libraries in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

### **Historiography**

My project resides at the intersection of three main fields: post-World War II American cultural history, visual culture studies, and disability studies. Post-WWII cultural history provides the backdrop for my project, with a particular focus on philanthropy, consumerism, and citizenship. Olivier Zunz's claim that "philanthropy in the United States is not simply the consequence of a universal altruistic impulse; it is also a product of the large organizational revolution that American managerial and financial capitalism orchestrated in the last century and a half" provides me with a starting point for considering the ways in which individuals and institutions entered into discussions over national norms and values through the poster child campaigns.<sup>7</sup> Lizabeth Cohen and Meg Jacobs' studies of consumerism as expressions of civic participation and social class in the postwar period inform my analysis of the tensions between charitable giving and

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<sup>7</sup> Oliver Zunz, *Philanthropy in America: A History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012): 294.

the surge of consumer spending as exemplified by the ebb and flow of fundraising achieved by the NFIP and MDA.

Histories of childhood in the twentieth-century provide both context for the experiences and voices of children and critical analytical frameworks for approaching the study of childhood through the history of emotions. Throughout this project, I emphasize the role of children as historical actors shaping the forms of the campaigns, as consumers of the media produced, and as participants in these annual charitable events. Moreover, this project challenges the common historical view of a child as “a potentiality rather than an actuality,” which was a guiding notion for poster child imagery and rhetoric.<sup>8</sup> This view of children as potential adults, as *tabula rasa*, influenced how people in postwar America perceived real poster children, and how scholars have since approached the study of children and childhood.

Historian Kristine Alexander outlines a valuable critique of the impulse to look for children’s agency as a way of recovering their experiences and voices. “Looking for ‘agency,’” she argues, “is a flawed intellectual project. It can flatten out differences across time and place, miss or minimize girls’ actions and choices, and obscure the social relations and power imbalances that shape young people’s lives.”<sup>9</sup> Instead, Karen Vallgård, Alexander, and Stephanie Olsen propose an alternate approach that centers on a concept of emotional formation as both pattern and process:

emotional formation only exists through the reiterated everyday emotional practices of individuals and collectives. Therefore, it is also a process that

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<sup>8</sup> Claudia Castañeda, *Figurations: Child, Bodies, Worlds* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 1.

<sup>9</sup> Kristine Alexander, “Agency and Emotion Work,” *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures* 7:2 (2015): 123.

depends on each individual learning the imparted codes of feeling. The concept thus signals forcefully that emotion structures are never fixed, but rather are continually consolidated or altered as individuals acquire and seek to align themselves with - or contest - given hierarchies of emotion.<sup>10</sup>

I use this framework to interrogate the emotional work expected of and exhibited by the poster children. In addition, this framework provides another way to examine how understandings of race, class, gender, and disability shaped poster child imagery and rhetoric in postwar America. Since emotion formation is a negotiated process, it helps reveal how staff at the NFIP/MOD and MDA perceived disease and disability and distilled those views into education and publicity materials. Crucially, it provides a way to surface the experiences of poster children by highlighting the “everyday emotional practices” they performed in the context of the poster child role.

Visual culture studies forms the second field central to this project. Taking John Tagg’s view that “Photographs are never ‘evidence’ of history; they are themselves the historical,” I approach photographs and visual imagery as constructed objects deeply embedded in specific intellectual and material historical circumstances.<sup>11</sup> Further, the constructed nature of an image means that it is, as Simon Watney describes, “always open to many potential inflections,” and always “able to break free of its moorings within a particular category.”<sup>12</sup> Histories of graphic and poster design pertaining to advertising

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<sup>10</sup> Karen Vallgård, Kristine Alexander, and Stephanie Olsen, “Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood” in Stephanie Olsen, ed. *Childhood, Youth and Emotions in Modern History: National, Colonial and Global Perspectives* (London, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 20.

<sup>11</sup> John Tagg, “Evidence, Truth and Order: A Means of Surveillance” in *Visual Culture: The Reader*, eds. Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall (Sage Publications, 1999): 247.

<sup>12</sup> Simon Watney, “On the Institutions of Photography,” in *Visual Culture: The Reader*, eds. Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall (Sage Publications, 1999): 144.

and propaganda also provide a context for the stylistic choices made by the artists and organizations, and the conventions and traditions the images drew on.

Disability studies is the third field I engage. Approaches to disability in the United States history typically fall into two categories: broad surveys and tightly focused studies on individual conditions or communities. The surveys, like Kim Nielsen's *A Disability History of the United States* and Joseph Shapiro's *No Pity: People with Disabilities Forging a New Civil Rights Movement*, present an overview of American history with disability-related topics added into existing narratives, highlighting the ways in which traditional studies have typically overlooked disability. David Oshinsky's *Polio: An American Story*, for example, falls in the second category and traces the story of polio in the US, with particular emphasis on the development and implementation of the Salk vaccine. The surveys and studies, however, rarely give sustained attention to the ways in which class, gender, and race are negotiated with disability in the creation of social identities and visions of American society.<sup>13</sup> My project's contribution, then, is to show the prevalence of representations of physical disability, foregrounding the significance of poster child campaigns in creating opportunities for people to see disability in the center, as well as the periphery, of postwar American society and history.

A subfield of disability studies considers disability and visuality. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's influential essay "The Politics of Staring: Visual Rhetorics of Disability in Popular Photography," outlines four primary forms of visual rhetoric in pictures of disability: the wondrous, sentimental, exotic, and realistic. While she

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<sup>13</sup> Susan Burch and Ian Sutherland, "Who's Not Yet Here? American Disability History," *Radical History Review* 94 (Winter 2006): 127-147.

convincingly argues for the prevalence of these tropes, she also claims that “none of these rhetorical modes operates in the service of actual disabled people.”<sup>14</sup> This sentiment is echoed in the scant scholarly work on the poster children, resulting in a perception of the campaigns as categorically exploitative and a particularly visible rallying point for disability rights activists. Robert Bogdan’s survey of photographic representations of disability follows this pattern by spending a disproportionate amount of time on Progressive era images of asylums and freak shows while largely glossing over poster child imagery. By placing Garland-Thomson’s position in conversation with those of Tagg and Watney, I will demonstrate the ways in which visual media created spaces for varied and contested notions of disability and normality.

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<sup>14</sup> Rosemarie Garland Thomson, “The Politics of Staring: Visual Rhetorics of Disability in Popular Photograph,” in *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities*, eds. Sharon L. Snyder, Brenda Jo Bruggeman, and Rosemarie Garland Thomson (New York: MLA Press, 2002), 56-75.

## **THE DIGITAL PROJECT**

This project presents an alternate structure for the elements required of a historical dissertation—historiography, artifacts, data, analysis, citations. In particular, the digital presentation allows me to foreground the visual materials of study, both within my analysis and as project elements on their own. This approach surfaces sources rarely seen, like those centered on the organizations' employees, the parents of poster children, and most crucially the poster children themselves.

### **Platform and Structure**

Using the publishing platform Scalar <<http://scalar.usc.edu>>, this project contains four long-form pieces of writing, each sub-divided into sections. These sections can be read sequentially through paths listed in the table of contents. In addition, each section has been written to be a self-contained piece of analysis that contributes to the project's overarching arguments, with relevant citations and sources linked within. These sections are also discoverable through the site's index and built-in visualizations of project elements, and can be read according to the reader's choice. I have ordered each essay chronologically to provide a familiar path through the project, should readers choose to follow it.

Readers can also engage with the project outside of the long-form pieces through the visual indexing of the digital elements and visualizations of thematic connections. I

have created a set of thematic and topical tags that serve as the project index. The landing page of this project includes a grid visualization of all the elements in the project: pages, media, annotations, and tags. This visualization allows viewers to see how elements are connected within the project: clicking on the red square representing the tag “class,” for example, reveals the thirty-three other elements that deal with this theme. Each element is assigned its own color by Scalar, and the color saturation of each square correlates with the number of connections associated with that particular item.

I have organized my discussion of the secondary literature into pages according to the particular field or sub-field, rather than creating individual pages for each book or article. This approach draws together the scholarship by field or topic, and then links outward to the relevant sections in the analysis and the connections with various parts of my analysis are more readily apparent. Citations for each reference appears at the top of each historiography page.

Inevitably, there were sources that I could not include directly within the four long-form pieces of writing for the sake of clarity. The digital presentation, however, allows me to include these otherwise “missing” poster child artifacts and stories in the project by linking the sources and annotations to the established set of thematic and topic tags. For example, while I mention poster child visits during President Johnson’s administration only briefly in the essay on rhythms of charity, there is a gallery of annotated images where the annotations provide deeper analysis and context. Taken together, the essays and the networked presentation of project elements reinforce in form

my analytical argument about the interrelatedness of charity, consumption, family, childhood, and the nation in the postwar period.

### **Development Process**

This project's examination of two private health charities that are still operational today presents unique challenges. Access to the images and subsequent copyright and image permissions issues have been the single largest challenge. As a study of visual culture, it was imperative that I not only have access to the breadth of poster child campaign materials for research purposes, but to be able to include them within my analysis. Image quality was largely inconsistent across the collections: some were available in archival quality formats while others were only available as poor scans of microfilmed publications. Whereas substitution is a common practice by scholars, archivists, and publishers, only rarely could I substitute a public domain image for a restricted image. Pursuing only public domain images would have ultimately warped the shape of the project.

Large portions of both organizations' archival records are unprocessed. The NFIP/MOD employed one full-time archivist who oversaw the collections until November 2015, when he was laid off as part of a larger reduction in staff and the organization closed the archive to researchers. The NFIP/MOD's archives are also inconsistently processed: while fundraising and publicity records were fairly well-sorted, the entire education division's records remained unprocessed and inaccessible. The MDA's archival materials are in far worse shape. When the organization moved its headquarters from New York to Tucson, Arizona many of the unsorted visual materials—



photographs, film footage, documents—were placed in a non-temperature controlled storage facility.<sup>15</sup> During my visit, I encountered several boxes of these unsorted materials: photographs had melted together, papers dried out, and metal fasteners rusted. This rendered much of their institutional records and materials unusable, so I instead had to rely on published materials and those few documents held by the publishing department.

Neither the NFIP/MOD or the MDA have digitized any of their holdings, which is likely due to lack of administrative interest and funding. Subsequently, my collection of digital images of their archival materials is one of the few extant digital corpuses of these artifacts. Given the tenuous state of both organizational archives, this project makes a valuable contribution in gathering, analyzing, and presenting these increasingly inaccessible items. In addition, digital projects on United States history to date have tended to side-step the problems I have encountered by working either on pre-copyright topics (pre-1923) or with digitized public domain sources from the twentieth century.<sup>16</sup> While these approaches have shed insights on important topics, continuing to do digital scholarship in these areas obscures historical agents, communities, and topics that do not fall within these parameters and fails to establish pathways for broader research in an increasingly digital world. My project, thus, contributes to the field of

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<sup>15</sup> This information came from Chris Medvescek, MDA Vice President of Publications, during a conversation.

<sup>16</sup> For example, banner projects in digital United States history include Valley of the Shadows, Republic of Letters, Richard White and Cameron Blevins' spatial work on railroads and post offices in the 19th century west—all pre-1923 topics. In the twentieth century, Photogrammar uses FSA photographs and Visualizing Kissinger primarily use government, and therefore public domain, sources.

digital history by highlighting both an underserved area of historical scholarship and an underserved set of sources, narratives, and methodological problems in digital history.

As the copyright holders, and due to a strong aversion to any “uncontrolled” circulation of their imagery, the March of Dimes Foundation, Muscular Dystrophy Association, and Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) charge exorbitant fees for the digital use of their images. For example, MOMA contracts out its image reproduction and permissions to Art Resource, which charges thirty dollars per image for dissertation use. That fee only allows “One-time, non-exclusive English language rights for the use of the images...for up to twenty print copies and electronic distribution via ProQuest Dissertations & Theses (PQDT) database.”<sup>17</sup> The MOD charges \$500 per image for the limited, non-exclusive use of a still image on a website.<sup>18</sup> Whereas MOMA would not alter its stance after consultation, the MOD granted me a limited free use of their images for the purposes of my dissertation with key stipulations that I password protect the images to prevent their circulation outside the project. The organizations named above worried especially about unauthorized downloading and subsequent circulation without explanatory text and citation or historical context. Despite their acknowledgement that mine is a scholarly project, they were unwilling to risk any potential unsanctioned circulation or interaction with their imagery or to recognize the ways in which fair use applies in the context of scholarship. In their view, guarding access through high fees and strict protections was necessary to prevent harm to their public image.

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<sup>17</sup> Liz Kurtulik Mercuri, email message to the author, February 5, 2016.

<sup>18</sup> March of Dimes rate card, 2015.

Quotations of unpublished archival documents were also a challenge. The MOMA requests that every quotation from their archival materials be cleared with them prior to any published use, including doctoral dissertations. I submitted and received permission to use selected quotations, which appear in my analysis of the 1949 collaborative polio poster project between the MOMA and MOD. Additionally, when I contacted the Special Collections Research Center at Syracuse University Libraries regarding their collection of Margaret Bourke-White's papers, I was informed that in addition to the costs for requesting photocopies of the archival materials, I would likely need to fill out additional forms and perhaps pay fees for including any quotations from this collection in my dissertation. After deliberation I chose not to pursue this collection of materials, which was a small supplemental set of documents, as they had little to directly contribute to my analysis.

In response to these constraints, I have divided my project in several ways after extensive consultation with GMU's Digital Publishing Production Lead Jeri Wieringa and Claudia Holland, the Head of Scholarly Communication and Copyright Office. First, the writing contained in my Project Overview section (Research Questions, Historiography, and Methodology; Digital Project Process Statement; and Bibliography) serves as my dissertation of record. It will be the document I submit and deposit to George Mason University (GMU) in accordance with their guidelines for doctoral dissertations. According to GMU, the dissertation is a PDF document, but the primary work completed for the degree does not necessarily need to be contained within that PDF. For example, performance artists can submit a process document and reflective statement

for their thesis while the performative piece of work that demonstrates mastery is not deposited. All files associated with a digital project are submitted as supplemental to, but not as part of, the dissertation itself. This separation of project elements allows me to negotiate the limitations imposed by the archives by creating different instances of the dissertation project.<sup>19</sup>

Since I chose Scalar as my project platform, I queried their team about “hiding” or password-protecting media files. Currently, there are two settings for media (visible or hidden). Hidden pages or media files preserve the restrictions desired by the MOD and MDA, but are then completely “invisible” to the reader and wouldn’t allow the display of any associated metadata or annotations. One suggestion from the Scalar team was to place the media files into a third-party repository that allowed password protection, and then import them via the “Import Image URL” function: this would import the files’ associated metadata, but prevent the image from being displayed. This would preserve the “presence” of the media object in Scalar, and allow me to link to and connect it with other project elements.

The challenge with this approach was finding a third-party platform with that functionality. I discussed this approach with Wieringa, and we identified several image repository options such as Flickr and Omeka, but these had serious limitations. Flickr’s,

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<sup>19</sup> GMU’s catalog describes the dissertation as “The dissertation is a written piece of original thinking that demonstrates doctoral candidates’ mastery of subject matter, methodologies, and conceptual foundations in their chosen field of study. This is generally achieved through consideration of a problem on the boundaries of knowledge in the discipline.” For the purposes of submission, “a complete electronic copy of his/her dissertation (signed Signature Sheet through Curriculum Vitae) as a PDF” is submitted via CD to University Dissertation & Thesis Services (UDTS), who then uploads the document and any supplemental files to the Mason Archival Repository System (MARS). <http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=27&navoid=5368#doctoraldegree>. Accessed February 23, 2016.

and particularly its parent company Yahoo's, instability posed a concern with regards to its longtime viability and what that would mean for the long-term stability of the images as well as the rights issues associated with uploading the images to the site. Omeka was a more stable option, but making an item private in Omeka meant that it would not be searchable through its public Application Program Interface (API) and thus non-importable into Scalar. In the end, I chose to upload all media files into Scalar, and to keep the "complete" version of the project hidden and password protected.

### **On Digital Dissertations**

This process raises interesting questions about the dissertation-as-publication. To these organizations, the dissertation was a publication in its own right, and only my status as a doctoral candidate working independently from a publisher kept them from pushing for full fees. GMU defines the dissertation broadly as "a piece of original scholarly writing that demonstrates a Ph.D. candidate's mastery of subject matter, methodologies, and conceptual foundations in the chosen field of study."<sup>20</sup> Practically, this has placed the dissertation in a grey area where it is recognized vaguely as a publication by virtue of being available online, but without the institutional markers (publisher endorsement or support) to identify it as a full scholarly publication on par with a journal article or monograph. The flexible definitions of what makes a dissertation at GMU, coupled with the history department's guidelines for digital dissertations, allowed me to parse elements to realize the project as I envisioned it—albeit in its current password-protected state.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> <http://historyarthistory.gmu.edu/graduate/phd-history#Dissertation>. Accessed February 20, 2016.

<sup>21</sup> <http://historyarthistory.gmu.edu/graduate/phd-history/digital-dissertation-guidelines>. Accessed February 20, 2016.

The liminal space of the dissertation, and the variable understandings of its status by the organizations with which I worked, made conversations about the nature of the dissertation, image permissions, and archive access difficult to negotiate. Being a doctoral candidate working on a dissertation made me and this project appear less threatening, perhaps, to the charities, and I assured them I was not interested in writing history-as-expose. I handled these conversations myself, with some suggestions from my committee and peers. And to some extent, like the provisions granted by the NFIP/MOD, that worked in my favor. But unlike scholars working through a publisher, for example, I lacked a formal support system that would advocate on my behalf for fair use of the images or to help with the negotiations for image use. I believe that there are images in my project that I could invoke fair use for, but I have never felt myself in a position to push the issue because these organizations have legal teams dedicated to preserving the companies' reputations. They have the resources to try to limit my display of the images for the purposes of scholarship, and they would win: I simply do not have the money to hire legal counsel to firm up my case for fair use or to pay the use fees for the images outright. As a result, whereas I had originally intended this to be a public-facing work of digital scholarship, I decided to keep the digital project largely hidden and have it instead serve as a test-case to for digital history dissertations for my department and for the discipline at large.

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