

The International Center for 8mm Film & Video  
Bob Brodsky & Toni Treadway, founders  
Brodsky & Treadway  
P.O. Box 335, 69 Warehouse Lane  
Rowley, Massachusetts 01969  
508-948-7985

April 24, 1996

Steven Leggett  
Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division  
The Library of Congress  
Washington, DC 20540-4690

Re: Study of the State of American Television & Video Preservation

Dear Steven:

I write to share some thoughts during the comment period. For the record, I wear two hats. As IC8, I do advocacy for amateur film, publishing a newsletter and articles and giving technical assistance. As B&T, I manage a studio for high quality film to video transfer of 16mm, 8mm and Super 8 reversal film, scene by scene at original frame rates.

Each day I give technical assistance to people with unique moving image materials. They range from amateurs to professionals: families, volunteers at town historical commissions, librarians, film or television producers, staff people at archives and art museums.

In nearly 20 years experience, I notice the public has a huge appreciation for moving images, a hunger for more cultural detail from them and a broad understanding of the inherent information contained in so-called home movies. At the same time, people lack basic information about film, video, moving image technology (future and past) and best preservation practices. To illustrate, I frequently talk with young family members who discover their elder's films and want to access the images. They invariably refer to this material as "video" even if the can is dated 1936 ! In further dialogue it is clear they do not know the difference between film and video but they are always pleased to have the distinctions explained to them. People who have gone to the trouble to seek help with their materials are usually very curious about the details of identifying, handling, storage, access, evaluation and such. It would help the cultural record (and me personally) if the Library of Congress could publish (or

cause to be published) basic low-cost guides for outreach to the public about materials found in family hands.

I believe that increasing public appreciation for moving image documents will result in excitement and support for the work of all the moving image preservation field at all levels. When the field is perceived as focussing on major works, they lose a busy public who think of deteriorating film as Rich Hollywood's problem or miles of videotape as the TV Networks' issue. In examining the diversity of the record that I see, it is clear that there is much to be lost if amateurs are not taught how to store, annotate, access and care for their materials. The explosion of home video in the 1980's enriched the record by allowing image making into more hands than previously with film, but consumer video has made a nightmare happen: its materials are in far greater danger than old amateur film materials. Many issues in the moving image preservation field are internal, technical, detailed and esoteric. We need to raise public awareness by meeting the public where they live with the information they urgently need.

I hope you will make it a priority to include simple, helpful, basic information on the amateur moving image gauges and formats in all plans, exhibitions, publications and such, specifying where necessary different actions recommended for them. This means basic training is in order as part of the Public Awareness campaign, especially with young people and even with colleagues who are concentrating in other areas.

I have a number of specific ideas on public initiatives and programs to suggest when it is appropriate. I believe enrolling families in preservation of their "home movie" imagery will increase support for and lighten the load of professional archivists. It will surely broaden the movie culture and ensure better conditions for lots of unique materials. Better than that, increased public awareness would give form and substance to the notion that our moving image heritage is a cultural treasure, jointly held by us all. There are things individuals can do to salvage history, to reclaim our stories and gestures, to renew our community life and to make us feel better in our skins, our homes and our neighborhoods. Amateur-made moving image materials can help enliven our culture and improve the society in which we live.

Sincerely,



Antoinette Treadway, co-founder, IC8 and partner, B&T