

Library of Congress

**Inquiry into the Current State of
AMERICAN TELEVISION AND VIDEO PRESERVATION**

**Public Hearing
Washington, March 26, 1996**

Testimony of the
CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING

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Thank you for the invitation to describe the activities of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting with respect to television and video preservation. CPB is the organization established by the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 to develop high-quality public telecommunications services throughout the country. I am Ted Coltman, CPB's executive director of new media and formerly director of policy development and planning.

CPB is prohibited by law from producing programs or owning and operating distribution systems such as broadcasting stations. The Corporation fulfills its responsibility for developing high-quality services chiefly by making grants to and contracts with program-makers and distributors, particularly public broadcasting stations.

Two distinct ventures in which CPB and the Annenberg Foundation collaborate to develop education-related materials--known as the Annenberg/CPB Projects--operate in somewhat different circumstances. Like CPB generally, the Projects make grants to and contracts with program producers, who generally hold copyright, but the Projects typically own all distribution rights in the products for which they provide production funding.

For nearly 30 years, the programs of public television have held an undisputed place among America's cultural treasure. CPB has a strong interest in the physical preservation of that legacy for scholarly and artistic uses.

The Public Broadcasting Act, in fact, authorizes CPB to "establish and maintain, or contribute to, a library and archives of noncommercial educational cultural radio and television programs and related material." As CPB is primarily a grant-making

organization, original production materials or high-quality master tapes rarely come into CPB's custody. Therefore, CPB's strong interest in preservation is largely effected through other parties--the most important of which are the program-makers.

David Liroff will describe for you the activities of WGBH in Boston, as I understand Jac Venza did for WNET in New York last week. Glen Clatworthy will describe the activities of public television's premiere distribution channel--National Program Service of PBS.

For at least the last decade, CPB has provided modest funding to the Museum of Television and Radio in New York to support its archival and preservation activities. During the last few years, with CPB's funding, the Museum has typically acquired about 30 hours of public television programming per year, and has catalogued, maintained and preserved an additional 60 hours per year from earlier acquisitions.

CPB also periodically donates to the National Public Broadcasting Archives at the University of Maryland College Park Libraries the television and video materials that it acquires when it makes production grants to program-makers. Typically, the producer is required upon completion of the program to deliver to CPB a reference copy. CPB has already donated to the NPBA most of its television and video materials for the years 1969-1987.

Currently, CPB has videotape copies of approximately 2,800 television and video programs, completed or first broadcast on public television since 1987. Additionally, the Annenberg/CPB Projects have videotape copies of approximately 1,700 television and video programs completed since 1983, all of which are still in videocassette distribution. Master tapes for these programs are in the custody of the Projects' distribution contractor.

The collections of both CPB's Television Program Fund and the Annenberg/CPB Projects will probably grow more slowly in the future as fewer new programs receive production funding from CPB.

CPB does not undertake any special physical preservation activities with respect to its own collections of television and video materials, nor are we aware of any significant losses of valuable television and video materials.

The materials in CPB's collections are not made available to researchers or other outside parties until they are donated to the NPBA. CPB places no restrictions on the use of those materials after they have been transferred to the NPBA.

From the standpoint of a grant-making agency, CPB has no particular recommendations concerning legal incentives that might encourage preservation. In general, we think that economic incentives have a powerful effect, so that

copyright holders will undertake preservation if they stand to realize a financial return greater than the cost of preservation and which could not be realized if the preservation were not undertaken. We have too little knowledge of the nature and cost of physical preservation activities to offer expert advice on how these activities compare with the time horizons of copyright, for example.

Considerable portions of any broadcaster's airtime, though, represent material for which little or no subsequent re-use is expected, and therefore there is little prospect of recouping any costs of preservation. This interstitial or time-sensitive informational material may be of little lasting interest to viewers, but it may be essential to scholarship in the field of media studies. Like archival preservation of the popular press, the need for this kind of preservation may have to be addressed by scholarly institutions rather than by the owners of the intellectual property.

I would like to thank you again for the invitation to assist in this important inquiry that the Library has undertaken. I'd be happy to try to answer--either here or in writing subsequently--any questions that you may have about CPB's activities.