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**Summary of major points for testimony  
to be presented by Graham Leggat,  
President, Board of Directors, Media Alliance  
on March 19, 1996  
at the  
Library of Congress Hearing on the  
Current State of American Television and Video Preservation**

Founded in 1979, Media Alliance is an advocacy and service organization dedicated to advancing the independent media arts - video, film and related electronic media - in New York State. Positioned between local and national groups, Media Alliance serves as an information clearinghouse on video preservation, organizing training opportunities and networking events, and provides technical assistance.

Media Alliance is concerned with the preservation of videos that fall into two general areas:

- video artworks produced by national, regional and New York artists, and
- community television produced by community-based organizations and video collectives.

These collections are housed in libraries, museums, media arts centers, artists' spaces, college media departments, video collectives, community organizations, public access television stations and with non-profit distributors. Beginning in the late 1960's, artists found video to be a new creative tool, and began producing works ranging from traditional documentaries, to narrative, conceptual, or image-processed work. At the same time, community-based video production, growing out of democratic traditions of free speech, equal opportunity, and active participation in civic life, became popular. The result is a historical and cultural legacy that, unfortunately, is deteriorating daily.

Many of the groups holding the collections are unfamiliar with moving image preservation, conservation and collection management, and lack staff to perform such tasks. The collections are currently largely uncatalogued, and unavailable or

underutilized by scholars and the public. In many cases, the materials are simply too fragile to view. Video technologies have continued to change, and early formats are obsolete. Many collections are stored under less than ideal conditions, subjected to dust and temperature fluctuations.

Inadequate care of the collections is due not to a lack of awareness of preservation needs, but simply to a lack of available funds and technical assistance. Little is known about the needs of the institutions for hardware, software, storage, training and planning to preserve these collections and make them available for public use.

We will recommend actions in several priority areas: systematic cataloguing of video collections, remastering or physical preservation, collection management, increasing funding, conservation through proper storage and handling, and strengthened relationships among those involved in moving image preservation. While strategies need to be pursued in each of these areas, we must take immediate steps to ensure proper storage and handling of the works, to prevent further deterioration as longer term issues are addressed.

National, regional and local strategies are needed to address preservation issues, and existing organizations and collaborative projects must be strengthened. There are needs for information and technical assistance, and periodic meetings to network and develop new skills. Professional surveys and research are needed to key areas such as storage, and to enhance the ability of groups to receive funding for preservation. In the distribution of funding and other resources, we must not force small organizations to compete against major institutions and repositories. There must be a recognition that tapes of significant value exist in many different cultural and geographic communities.