

**STATEMENT CONCERNING THE NEED TO PRESERVE  
THE NATION'S LOCAL TELEVISION HERITAGE**

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**INTRODUCTION**

My name is Helene Whitson. I am the Special Collections Librarian/Archivist at the J. Paul Leonard Library, San Francisco State University. My responsibilities include management of the Library's main rare and fine book collection, management of the University's archival materials, management of a collection of approximately 6000 historic children's books and related materials, and management of the San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive, a collection of approximately 10 million feet of 16 mm film and videotape, including a core collection of footage from two local television stations, as well as other moving image materials.

I am here as a person who has many different roles. First, I speak as a Moving Image Archivist--as one whose major collections are 35 years of news produced by local television stations, and as one who has worked for years with historians, journalists, documentary film makers and other researchers from all over the world desperately seeking moving image footage illustrating our history, and finding that very little is available. I believe that television news and documentaries have been placed low on the list in terms of moving image preservation, and yet this material is vital to the understanding of American culture. I speak as Co-Chair of the News and Documentary Working Group of the Association of Moving Image Archivists, those archivists who have special charge to preserve the nation's television news and documentary footage. I speak as a Library Faculty member at San Francisco State University, an institution which has a well-known and well-respected degree program in Broadcasting and Electronic Communication Arts. I speak as a pioneer in the the field of local television news archives, one who entered at its beginning in the early 1980s, when there were no guidelines or manuals to read. Since that time, many others have built upon my work. Ours is a small, closely-knit field in which we learn from each other. I speak as a member of the Planning Committee for and a

participant in the 1987 Madison Conference, the first national Local Television News Archives conference, where moving image archivists came together for the first time specifically to address issues concerning local television news collections.

I also speak as one, who, along with several of my television archives colleagues, makes outreach presentations to many other professional organizations, to share with them the importance of preserving local television news. Steven Davidson, Director of the Louis Wolfson II Media History Center, Miami-Dade Public Library, and I have spoken together before many people in different organizations, sharing with them the work that we do and the work which needs to be done. It is the two of us who have done most of the outreach in this area, because we have taken on the preservation of local television news as a personal mission to make certain that material will be saved. We know there are other collections "out there," but it is very difficult for the lone archivist in a small institution to find the funds for travel and outreach.

Since 1987, I have spoken on the subject of local television news before such groups as the Society of American Archivists, the Society of California Archivists, the Broadcast Education Association, Bay Area Archivists, the Radio and Television News Directors Association, the Association of Moving Image Archivists, the American Library Association, the American Historical Association, and the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. During the rest of this year, I will be speaking at the Broadcast Education Association, the Art Librarians Association, the Conference of InterMountain Archivists, and the Society of American Archivists. Almost all of the travel and other costs of this outreach have been at my own personal expense.

Most of all, I speak for me--as a citizen who has grown up during the television age, and has come to realize the great importance of this footage as primary source material for the study of 20th century American history and culture.

My purpose in coming to speak today is to plead with you to do SOMETHING at the national level to save the nation's local television news and documentary heritage, as a vital record of American culture over the last half century. There are appallingly few of us now struggling to preserve this material. In fact, at least three local television archives which began before mine have closed in the past few years. Most of us have almost no financial resources with which to carry out the management of these collections. Much of what might

have been saved is already lost, and if nothing is done to help us, that little we have managed to preserve thus far will gradually be lost as well. We need your help!

Television is an industry which profoundly has changed American lives. From its popular beginnings in 1948-1949 to the present time, it has changed our habits, our mores, the very patterns of the way we live. It has changed the way we look at history --past, present, and future. It has been given a sacred trust through being invited into our homes. It often has taken the place of a family member in entertaining our children. It has produced a host of other products and inventions--from the TV tray and TV dinner to VCR's and home theater. It has transformed entertainment, sports, advertising, political campaigns, and the daily news.

Television has received its share of criticism. It has been accused of breeding violence and hatred among our youth. It has been condemned for providing information and entertainment structured to appeal to the lowest common denominator. But however we think of it, television has been a central part of American culture for the last half century, and it is absolutely unthinkable that some record of this television history should not be saved for the appreciation of generations to come, and for examination and assessment by future historians.

Historical television footage is not only important as a record of our television culture. Especially, the local news is a rich mine of visual images, moving historical documentation. A TV clip of a person or an event conveys a sense of the subject in a way that print and still images can never do. Moving images have tremendous value in educating and informing us, and in capturing snapshots of our life and society.

The general public also has come to think of television as a part of their lives. Because it has entered their homes, pervaded so much of what they do, and in many cases shaped their attitudes and values, they have a proprietary feeling about the programs, the news, and the other products of the television industry. They think of it as **theirs!** They just assume that **everything** they have seen on television--entertainment or factual programs--is there should they want to see it again. They take both Lucy and "Live At Five" for granted--both will always be there. They also assume that television covered everything that happened in their communities, both major and minor events. Because television is such a part of their lives, they think that everything has been or is being saved. They are most amazed to learn that only a small part of what was created actually has been saved, and that much of

it is in fragile physical condition. They are dumbfounded that there are very few of us saving materials, often with little or no support, again assuming that they can find moving image information about the history of their communities, even including specific family events that may have been shown for a few seconds as part of some daily story, as well as locally produced documentaries or entertainment programs. Also disconcerting to them is the fact that television news beyond 1980 has been and is being erased on a daily basis--that the future may not be able to present even an **incomplete** moving image picture of what happened in the past, simply because the materials no longer exist. They are stunned to learn that video and audiotape, CDs, laser and optical disks are not permanent media. They ask with genuine concern what can be done? Who owns these materials? Where is the industry that produced them? **My colleagues, my patrons, my friends and I want these materials to be saved.**

Part of my library-related training is in bookbinding and preservation. In fact, I was appointed by the California State Librarian to be a member of the 25-person California State Task Force which developed the *California Cooperative Preservation Plan*, California's long-term preservation plan for materials of cultural importance housed in California libraries, archives, historical societies and museums. As a member of that committee, I spoke very strongly for the inclusion of moving images as part of California's cultural heritage.

My bookbinding/preservation teachers always told their students that we were trustees for materials important in our cultural heritage. It was and is our responsibility to preserve as best as possible those materials which were in our care. Posterity will remember the work we did or did not do. We were trained to know the importance of these materials and to do what we can. Those few of us who are archivists for local television news collections know full well that we are trustees for an invaluable historical resource. We agonize over the facts that we do not have the staff, the space, the funds to care for these precious materials, and that many of our collections may deteriorate before we find the support to preserve them. What a loss that will be to understanding the culture of our country and of our times. We cry out for assistance in preserving these records of our communities.

We come from a variety of institutional types--academic institutions, historical societies, public libraries, museums. Many of our collections are in special collections departments, and often we must compete within our own institutions for funds. Actually, I have no budget at all for my department. I purchase nothing in terms of collections, but receive

items that either 1) have been purchased elsewhere in the library and are sent to Special Collections because of rarity, format, fragility, etc., or 2) are received as gifts and donations.

I work in a state-supported academic institution, in a state which has immense needs for higher education funding, for library and information center funding. San Francisco State University has approximately 25,000 students on a site which was planned for a maximum of 15,000. And, more students will be coming in the future. San Francisco State University is a 97-year old liberal arts, publicly-supported institution. We have a wide variety of baccalaureate and masters degree programs, and give a joint doctorate in special education with the University of California, Berkeley. We moved to our present campus location in 1953-1954. Many of the buildings and infrastructure items, such as pipelines, boilers, etc., are 40 years old, and are disintegrating. Much of my library building is old, crowded with materials and with patrons. Although we would love to have a new library, the State of California has not given us the funds to build one.

When my library needs to enter more fully the electronic age and purchase more CD-ROMS and Internet connections, buy computer terminals for librarian, staff, and patron use, buy a new online system, when we need to purchase books and periodicals, upgrade our wiring, buy new furniture, the last thing on our library list of priorities is funding for preservation of a special collection of local television news materials. I receive no direct institutional funding at all for handling my 10 million feet of moving images, but I must note that the J. Paul Leonard Library has been most generous in in-kind support for our moving image collections. I imagine that support would amount to at least \$50,000 per year, if one added up the costs for part of the salary and benefits paid to me and my assistant, housing for the collections, shelving, phone calls, photocopying, postage for correspondence, etc. The Friends of the J. Paul Leonard Library have supported this mission as well through approving at least \$17,000 in grant proposals which I submitted, and helping to raise \$30,000 for the purchase of equipment. In fact, it was one of our previous Library Directors who accepted the initial KQED Film Archive, because she could see the importance of saving local television news collections. San Francisco State University certainly has made a major commitment to the preservation of local television news and other programs.

I receive no funds from the donors of the materials. We do not hold copyright on any of our moving image materials, so we cannot charge licensing fees. When we began acquiring

this material 15 years ago, in the first wave of smaller, regional, non-originating agencies taking these huge collections, we had no idea of the costs involved in organizing, preserving, and making accessible the materials. Steel film cans can cost from \$4-\$15 a can, archival plastic cans can now only be purchased in 10,000 can lots, split reels can cost up to \$100 for a 1600 foot or 2000 foot one, splicing tape runs approximately \$2.25 per roll, wrap-around splicing machines can cost several hundred dollars, and 16mm film viewers aren't even being made any more! We didn't realize that we should write financial support criteria into our deeds of gift or bargain with the donor so that the preservation of these historic materials would be a joint project.

In fact, the only funding I have had for the work of organizing, preserving and indexing the moving image collections has come from grant funds. Since 1981, I have secured grants from federal, state and local sources totalling approximately \$135,000. My initial grant was for \$55,000, funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. These grants have enabled us to hire personnel and purchase equipment and supplies, for limited periods of time. We also charge fees to patrons not connected to the CSU system. Those fees include a required charge for joining the Friends of the J. Paul Leonard Library at the Continuing Patron level, plus hourly research fees for use of the databases and log books, as well as hourly fees for paging and set up. I have a fixed fee for all users, as I do not have the time or staff to differentiate between educational users and big spenders. Unfortunately, the approximately \$1200 per year I accrue from fees does nothing to provide funding for the archival film cans I need, the new equipment, leader, film cleaner, splicing tape, or provide for hiring staff. Patrons will often ask for waiver of the fee, telling me they are working on low budget projects, but I respond that mine is a no-budget operation.

I do what I can to enlist the services of student interns and volunteers, but the time and effort required for me to train and supervise such helpers is considerable. On two occasions, when I was fortunate to have 3 interns at once, we were able to process 35,000 feet during a semester. It has been my experience through my grants that a skilled staff member, working full time, can process approximately 50,000 feet of film per month.

People occasionally ask why we don't preserve the collection by simply transferring it all to digital form. The cost of such a project would be astronomical, and we still would not have the equipment to view it. In fact, I have no funds to transfer any part of the collection

to any new medium. We can't even afford to transfer to new video stock the many videotapes which are becoming unusable due to deterioration.

The J. Paul Leonard Library at San Francisco State University began its historic moving image program in 1981, with the acquisition of the KQED Film Archive, approximately 1.8 million feet of 16 mm news and selected documentary film covering the period 1968-1980, produced by San Francisco's Public Broadcasting System station. We received a \$55,000 National Historic Publications and Records Commission grant to organize, repair, and transfer the collection. We were able to process approximately 424,000 feet of film with grant funds. Five years later, we acquired the KPIX Film Library, a collection of approximately 5 to 7 million feet of 16 mm news and selected documentary film covering the period 1955-1980, produced by San Francisco's CBS affiliate. Since that time, we have acquired other television collections, mostly programs produced by KQED. We also house local Emmy Award-winning programs from 1974-date. Our only ventures outside materials produced specifically for television were several collections given by donors:

1. an approximately 1300 item, 16 mm film "sampler" moving image collection created by a collector, which includes major motion pictures, shorts, documentaries, travelogues, animated films, and trailers, as well as entertainment programs and other works, such as commercials, produced for television;
2. an amateur color film of events that took place at the 1939 Worlds Fair on Treasure Island, which includes footage of Diego Rivera painting the mural now housed at City College of San Francisco;
3. ten 16 mm Castle Films end of the year newsreels, selected years, 1937-1948;
4. an independently-produced film concerning San Francisco Bay Area life in the 1960s.

#### **ARCHIVAL/INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES**

San Francisco State University's mission is as follows:

"To create and maintain an environment for learning that promotes respect for and appreciation of scholarship, freedom, human diversity, and the cultural mosaic of the City of San Francisco and the Bay Area; to promote excellence in instruction and intellectual accomplishment; and to provide broadly accessible higher education for residents of the region and state, as well as the nation and world."

Examination of local news and other television footage certainly teaches students about the people and their activities. It is an additional non-print resource for academic exploration.

Appraisal criteria include acquiring material which supports one of the Library's services--that of providing information concerning local Bay Area history, culture, life, and events. We acquired our moving image collections in order to support our University's mission and its curriculum, just as we support them with print materials. We will continue to acquire selected moving image collections which support those categories as appropriate and feasible.

#### COLLECTIONS ISSUES

The San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive acquires material mainly which covers history, culture, life, and other events in the greater San Francisco Bay Area. The Collection Policy for Archives/Special Collections is quite specific:

"Archives/Special Collections acquires only in areas of already established collections:

- a) Bay Area life, culture, society and history, especially as captured by moving image documentation;
- b) the history of San Francisco State University, and
- c) historic children's literature and texts.

Examples of fine printing are not collected, *per se*, although items of particular value from the main collections are transferred to Archives/Special Collections from time to time.

No money currently is expended to acquire materials for the Archives/Special Collections Department, nor are gifts or other donations actively solicited. Often

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individuals and institutions who learn of our collections will donate appropriate materials which fit into our areas of collecting. In addition, curriculum support materials which are unique, of special historical interest, and/or are of considerable financial value may be placed in Archives/Special Collections for special handling and close monitoring of use."

Our entire moving image collection is estimated to be a total of 10 million feet of 16 mm film and videotape. The holdings date from the 1920s and 1930s? (from the "sampler" collection) to 1995. Many of the early films, such as Laurel and Hardy or a film about Melius, seem to be later 16 mm copies, since they have sound. The collections are as follows:

**KQED (PBS) Film Archive.** ca. 1968-1980 for newsfilm. Documentaries from the late 1950s-early 1960s on. Approximately 1.8 million feet of 16 mm film.

**KPIX (CBS) Film Library.** ca. 1955-1980 for newsfilm. Documentaries from the late 1950s on. Approximately 5-7 million feet of 16 mm film, in addition to forty 2" open reel videotapes. The KPIX Film Library also contains approximately 657 programs of the early, syndicated news program, **Telenews**, covering the period 1948-1952.

**Local Emmy Award winners.** 1974-date. Approximately 730 videocassettes, mostly 3/4", although many entries from 1992 on are on Betacam.

**Over Easy** (a KQED nationally-syndicated daily production which dealt with issues of aging). 1977-1983. Approximately 660 videocassettes, mostly 3/4" although there are approximately six 2" and 1" open reel videotapes.

**VideoWest** (a locally produced, syndicated pre-MTV 1/2 hour rock variety show, seen on KQED.) ca. 1978-1980. Approximately 55 3/4" videocassettes.

**Patchwork** (a KQED-produced program with musician Laura Weber, concerning historical songs from around the country.) ca. 1960s. Approximately eleven 2" open reel videotapes.

**Guitar, Guitar** (a KQED-produced program with musician Laura Weber, concerning various aspects of guitar playing.) ca. 1960s. Approximately twelve 2" open reel videotapes

**San Francisco State University Broadcast Industry Conference submissions.** (Similar to Peabody Awards.) Approximately 30 3/4"videocassettes. 1986.

### NOT TOTALLY TELEVISION

**Paul Bentley Moving Image Study Collection.** A gift from a donor of approximately 1300 items which includes major motion pictures, shorts, documentaries, travelogues, commercials, and animated films, as well as entertainment and other programs produced for television, covering the silent movies to the 1960s. 16 mm film.

**Castle Films end of the year newsreels, selected years, 1937-1948.** Ten 16 mm films.

**Goldner film.** 16 mm amateur, silent , color film of the 1939 Worlds Fair on Treasure Island, including footage of Diego Rivera painting the mural now housed at City College of San Francisco.

**Newsreal, by Kelly Hart,** an independent filmmaker. 16 mm color film of San Francisco Bay Area in the 1960s, including Hippies.

The predominant format in the San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive is 16 mm film, both optical and magnetic stripe, although we also have 3/4" and 1/2" VHS videocassettes, as well as 1" and 2" open reel videotape. We do have major problems in managing and enlarging our holdings, including funding for everything from staff to supplies, as well as space and environmental controls.

### PRESERVATION ISSUES

At the present time, preservation of our television film collections is defined as examining, repairing, logging, compiling film footage into uniform size reels, housing (in cans or whatever is available), and when able, transferring film to a different medium

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(in this case 1/2" videocassette) for reference use. Video preservation is defined as transferring older video to new 1/2" VHS stock, CDs, or some other media, although most of these media are impermanent. Also at issue is the equipment needed both for transferring and for playing both older **and** newer formats. We purchased a custom-designed film chain in 1985-1986 when we received our first grant, but we are frozen into the technology of that time, since at present, we have no other funds to purchase equipment. (As an aside, I must note that the CineScan Film Viewer, an absolutely necessity for us when just viewing our 16 mm television film collections, is no longer being made. We were able to recondition our one viewer this time, but what will we do when we can no longer repair our one machine? We do not have the funds to purchase a \$40,000 piece of equipment. How will we view our film? Even if the answer is to transfer the film to some other format, how can we be certain we will obtain the funds to do that?)

We hired staff to work on the project, and transferred our film collection to 1/2" VHS because that was the format most widely used at our institution. If we were to transfer more of our collections today, we would consider transferring to CDs, although we would have to look at the cost of purchasing the proper equipment or contracting out the process.

At the time we were planning our transferring project, we debated sending the film to a laboratory, but decided to do it in-house, because it would be easier and less expensive. In addition, we thought that we might obtain additional collections and thus have the equipment needed to do future preservation projects. We have transferred approximately 424,000 feet of the KQED Film Archive 16 mm film to 2-hour, 1/2" VHS videocassettes, and we have transferred approximately 140,000 feet of the KPIX Film Library 16 mm film to 2-hour, 1/2" VHS videocassettes. Because we were under time constraints when doing these projects, we were not able to view the video copies for quality. Since we are retaining the original film, we can duplicate again anything which was not done well the first time.

In terms of institutional resources, such as full-time staff, equipment, and funds, being devoted to preservation in the San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive, NO institutional resources are devoted to preservation of this material on a full-time basis. Most of the funding we received for actual preservation work comes from external sources, although the University certainly is providing in-kind assistance.

Because we do not hold copyright and because the Library does not have the resources to transfer all our film to videotape or other media, patrons often must use original footage for

reference. Access is important to us. We would not have accepted these collections were they not to be used. We wish desperately to preserve the footage because it is part of our national heritage, but people must be able to use it. When I first began working with the moving images 15 years ago, I thought that we should copy everything so that the original would be left repaired and ready for re-copying, if necessary. Such a project is a huge, expensive, and time-consuming undertaking, and we cannot begin such a project without outside help.

When patrons need copies, and have received permission to copy from the copyright holder, they are referred to a designated outside laboratory for copy work. They negotiate with the laboratory in terms of what images they want transferred, to which medium it will be transferred, how long it will take, cost, etc. We do nothing but send the footage to the laboratory by courier, and it is returned to us by the same method. The patron never takes the moving image out of our department. We never see the finished copy provided by the laboratory to the patron, so we do not know the quality of the reproduction. I have had patrons inform me that they are pleased with the work of the laboratory.

Since both media in my collection are suffering from ills particular to them (vinegar syndrome in the case of some television newsfilm and documentaries, and tape deterioration in the case of some television videotapes), an immediate issue is either stabilization of the affected items, and/or transfer to other media. I cannot take these particular actions without outside funding, and the need is critical. Many of the "sick" moving images must remain in my department along with "well" ones, in addition to University Archives and rare books collections, because we have nowhere else in the building to put them.

Other preservation priorities for my television film (and other film) collections are to have them processed--examined, identified, repaired, housed in archival containers, logged so that I can find particular items when needed, compiled into uniform-sized reels where appropriate, and stored in an environmentally-controlled area. My preservation priorities for my television video collections are to have them transferred to viewable formats where necessary and appropriate, and stored in an environmentally-controlled area.

## INFORMATION AND ACCESS ISSUES

Most of our television news and selected documentary film can be used by researchers. We use finding aids both created by the stations and created by us. About 7000 news stories in the KPIX Film Library (out of approximately 40,000) have not yet been logged, and therefore are inaccessible. A small portion of the KPIX Film Library is physically inaccessible. Our television video collections also can be used, except for those which are in formats for which we have no equipment (1", 2", and the new Betacam format), or are too deteriorated to view (such as many of our early Local Emmy-Award winners).

We do not hold copyright to any of our collections, and our materials are available for on-site viewing only. We are very insistent upon protecting the rights of the copyright owners. Viewers must obtain permission from the copyright holder before we will send the footage to a laboratory for copying. We cannot charge licensing fees. San Francisco State University and California State University system personnel may use the collections free of charge, but patrons from elsewhere must join the Friends of the J. Paul Leonard Library at the Contributing Member level, as well as paying fees for use of the logbooks/databases and for paging/set-up.

Through the use of student assistants, interns, and volunteers, we have been creating local listings of materials in our collections. Using FileMaker Pro 2.1, we have entered approximately 32,000 individual subjects/titles into our various databases. These titles/subjects can range from the title of a specific station-produced documentary, to the subject written on the leader of a news story rollette. We have many more items to log. In the future, we hope to do content analysis of all of our materials through the use of student interns. The students view the footage, summarize its contents, learn about the topic, and improve their writing skills at the same time. We have analyzed at least 300 stories in the KQED Film Archive of approximately 8800 stories. Such analysis is a very long-term project. At this time, the computerized data is not available through the Internet or through special links to users inside or outside the Library.

Our users are many and their research needs vary. They include students, faculty members, general researchers, independent filmmakers, and major television network personnel. Images from this collection have been used in such films and television programs as the Academy-Award Winning *The Life and Times of Harvey Milk*, *Eyes On The Prize II, Berkeley In The Sixties*, the BBC history of rock and roll, as well as in

acclaimed local programming, such as KQED's series on San Francisco neighborhoods (beginning with *The Mission* and *Chinatown*), their program on historic San Francisco places and activities which no longer exist, entitled *The Way Things Were*, KPIX's 1995 local Emmy-Award winning news segments about Bay Area events which happened in 1969, and a new production about the history of the United Farm Workers, which will be shown on PBS in the near future.

### STORAGE FACILITIES

In terms of physical storage conditions, much of the material in the San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive is stored in Archives/Special Collections, along with University Archives materials and rare books. The rest of the collections are stored in rooms elsewhere within the Library. The Library recently installed a sprinkler system throughout our building. Archives/Special Collections (and, indeed, almost all of the Library) has **no** environmental controls, nor do we have any vaults.

### CATALOGING AND DOCUMENTATION

We have not yet listed ANY of our material in our online catalog or for national systems, such as OCLC, since they are not yet cataloged. We are doing preliminary work in logging and indexing our collections, constantly adding new information to our databases.

There still is debate among local television news archivists on how to catalog local television news collections--at the collection level, the series level, the item level? Patrons want very specific subjects, so would appreciate extensive information at the item level. Providing that information at present is time-consuming and expensive. Other collections in our holdings, such as the Paul Bentley Moving Image Study Collection, contain completed films and other works, which readily can be cataloged according to standardized systems. We would, however, have to apply for a grant to hire a cataloger.

### WHAT CAN BE DONE

Are there things which can be done? Yes! But, we archivists cannot do the work without national support. **We need:**

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**-Money**, funding to help pay for equipment, supplies, and experts to work with us in preserving these collections. It is not right to ask a few institutions to carry the burden of preserving this massive amount of nationally important historical documentation. We need the funds to do what we must for preservation;

**-Equipment**, with which to view and to preserve these collections. Many of us have both obsolete and new formats for which we have no equipment. It would be helpful to explore the establishment of regional and/or national equipment depositories, with experts in their use, so that we can view and/or transfer our images;

**-Access to experts and consultants**, who can help us begin to organize our collections, help us when we encounter a particular problem, help us especially with our preservation needs, since time is indeed of the essence;

**-Space**, in which to store these massive collections in an environmental setting. We need national help in funding proper environmentally controlled storage areas within our own institutions for these collections, especially for smaller, non-profit institutions which usually do not have the space or funding. Perhaps regional storage centers might be an answer for some;

**-National awareness and support on the part of the ordinary citizen for the preservation of our television heritage.** Many people seem to understand the problem of nitrate film deterioration and the nation's interest in preserving our national film/cinema heritage. They are unaware of the danger to their television legacy. I would like to see a nationally-supported program on television which educates Americans about television's place in American life, how television footage is used to document history and cultural life, the need to preserve the footage, and the work that is presently occurring, perhaps something which would have the same effect as *Slow Fires* did for acid-paper and disintegrating books ;

**-Support for the work of television archives and archivists** , perhaps through funding of periodic conferences similar to the first National Local Television News Conference supported by the National Historic Publications and Records Commission in 1987. It has been almost 10 years since that conference, and we need another such gathering to bring together specifically those of us who care for

local television archives (especially news), to meet, talk, exchange ideas and information, and learn about new developments to aid us in our work;

**-Support from the television industry**, perhaps the most important support of all. I have not heard much from the television industry during the 15 years or so I have been connected with the moving image archives field. It is professionals in other fields who are saving the products of this industry, who view the footage produced for television as a part of America's heritage. Does the industry not care? If so, why not? Is it acceptable that our history since 1980 has been erased? Do citizens have anything to say about what will or will not be kept? We need to know and we very much need their involvement.

### CONCLUSION

I wish to state again my plea that the nation save its local television heritage--those local and regional programs which have so documented and affected American life in the latter part of the twentieth century. I wish make a special appeal on behalf of those of us who are curators of local and regional collections, who are in smaller, and/or non-profit institutions. We are trying to save what little remains in terms of moving image documentation of our communities, from local television news to locally-produced teenage dance and children's programs from the 1950s, and we cannot do it by ourselves.

I have been the curator of the San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive for 15 years, and have struggled during that time to find the funding to process and preserve my collection, and make it usable. I have accomplished much in that time, and I would say that my collection is about 20% processed. But, there is so much more to do! My collection is only one of many that are "out there"--at the television stations and in other repositories. It is my guess that there is at least **150 million feet** of critically important local television news and documentary footage mouldering away across the United States. We don't know where all of these collections are, but we must find and preserve them before it is too late.

These images document our lives, the lives of ordinary citizens as well as the locally noteworthy in various areas of the country. These materials do not belong only to the industry, or to residents of the region, but to the American people. We, the curators, are few in number, and usually without many resources to care for our charges. But, we need more help than just from those in the archival, historic, and academic fields. We need the



support of government on all levels, the television industry, and ultimately, the people. There is no "quick fix." To preserve local television production from across the country will take a major commitment on the part of government and other funders. **Not** to care for these ordinary and extraordinary materials is to be derelict in our duty as as professionals responsible for the repositories which preserve the nation's heritage. Whatever we and you do--posterity will be the judge.