

JAN 26 1993

MOTION PICTURE, BROADCASTING  
AND RECORDED SOUND DIVISION

To: Members of the Panel Constituted for the Preservation Study Public  
Hearings on 2/12 and 2/26, 1993

From: Ben Levin, Member National Film Preservation Board  
Representing the University Film and Video Association

*President*

Donald J. Zirpola  
Loyola Marymount University

*Executive Vice-President*

Joan Lynch  
Villanova University

*Conference Vice-President*

Victoria O'Donnell  
Oregon State University

*Past President*

Ben Levin  
University of North Texas

*Editorial Vice-President*

Tim Lyons  
Emerson College

*Secretary*

William O. Huie, Jr.  
Corpus Christi State University

*Treasurer*

Mitchell W. Block  
Direct Cinema Limited

*Board of Directors*

David O. Thomas  
Ohio University

J. Steven Hank

University of New Orleans

Patricia Zimmerman  
Ithaca College

Ken Dancyger  
New York University

Lilly Boruszkowski  
Southern Illinois University

Nina Leibman  
Loyola Marymount University

*Memberships*

George Wehbi  
University of Southern California

*Sustainer Liaison*

Rebecca Hayden  
Wadsworth Publishing

*Scholarships/Grants Office*

J. Stephen Hank  
University of New Orleans

*Government Liaison*

Marion Weiss  
University of the District of Columbia

*International Liaison*

Henry Breitrose  
Stanford University

*Archivist*

John B. Kuiper  
University of North Texas

*Journal of Film and Video*

Michael Selig  
Emerson College

*UFVA Digest*

Steve Fore  
Gerry Veeder  
University of North Texas

*Minority Issues*

Betsy A. McLane  
Emerson College L.A.

*SCRIPT*

William Miller  
Ohio University

The importance of a serious consideration of the state of film preservation in the United States is long overdue. There are many dedicated people around the country who have demonstrated sincere concern about the situation; there are others who have devoted entire professional careers to this endeavor. There are many individual archives in this country, ranging from those that are governmentally supported to those based in museums and at major universities. There are also private collectors who have played a major role in the stimulation of concern in this area. Many of the women and men I have met who are most passionate about their missions in our field have been those committed to preserving this wonderful national heritage. Almost without exception, these activities are undervalued and underfunded.

From a personal perspective, as a documentary filmmaker and teacher, I am particularly concerned about the lack of attention that has been paid to the preservation of important documentary films of the 1950's, 60's and 70's. While there is a strong lobby supporting the resale and consequent "preservation" of unedited archival footage----many of us are also deeply concerned about the safety of our creative nonfiction heritage as manifested in completed classic films from this 30 year period. These are the films that inspired me and many of my colleagues to commit ourselves to careers in this field. Sadly, we have been having great difficulty locating suitable projection prints of many important documentaries from the period to share with our students---and the situation continues to deteriorate. Trying to save a film through video transfer is, in my view, an emergency procedure and not a viable long-term solution to this complex problem.

I would strongly recommend the establishment of an advisory panel of some kind that might attack this documentary dilemma directly. I know from experience that those of us who are deeply concerned about this problem would be willing to offer whatever advice and assistance that might contribute to making some coordinated progress in this area.

The preservation of film in the most general sense is a huge endeavor. If all films are considered as a totality, with insufficient concern for the peculiarities of specific genres (even sub-genres), we would be selling ourselves very short, indeed.

378

Ben Levin