

Museum of Broadcast Communications

OPENING

I'm Cary O'Dell, the archives director for the Museum of Broadcast Communications in Chicago. ~~Bruce DuMont~~, our founder and president, originally scheduled to be here today could not make it due to a sudden change in his schedule.

As I said I'm the archives director for the Museum--I oversee an archive of 10,000 television programs, 8,000 commercials and 50,000 hours of radio programs. The Museum of Broadcast Communications is one of only two broadcasting museum in the United States. The second, the Museum of Television & Radio, is in New York City.

You might be asking yourself--as I am frequently asked--what's the difference between their museum and our museum. I can only give you my standard answer: I don't know. I've never been to their museum or to New York; in fact, until yesterday I'd never been to Washington, DC.

Frequently when people ask me about "us" vs. "them" I often infer from that that somewhere they believe there has to be a significant difference or a competition between our two institutions. That's unfortunate: we don't assume or insist that there should be only one art museum in the country; or one history museum; or one science museum. Surely, broadcasting (television and radio) has proved itself important and influential enough to justify many museums, archives and symposiums such as this one.

After I tell people this, I often sense a bit of disappointment. They want there to be some competition, some jockeying for position, between other museums and mine; between other archives and mine.

Though I don't think there is competition--even a "friendly competition"--let me, just for the record, say that there shouldn't be. Let's take off the gloves (if indeed there are gloves) and from this day forward create better lines of communication and cooperation. We are all in the same business. What we do is for the love of a medium.

FIRST

And that's where I want to start my comments today: despite fifty years as a mass medium, television is still often treated by those who watch it (and often even by those who make it as well) as a distant relative of high art and even as a stepchild of other performative arts as theater and cinema. Yet television is our single most important vehicle for entertainment, information and the progression of the American character. The awesomeness of its reach and impact never ceases to amaze me--and I'm around it every day of the week:

It has made our world a village. It has changed the way we vote. It has changed the way we see ourselves and each other.

And through news, documentaries, soap operas, prime time dramas, and, yes, even though daytime talk shows, it is the most immediate and insightful means for confronting and illuminating social problems and controversial issues.

In addition to that: it is also our most culturally reflective tool. I often infuriate my friends--and today you--by making the following pronouncement: if I were to come back 100 years from now and wanted to learn about contemporary life in these United States I wouldn't need to see your newspapers, your stock exchange or your statistics. Just show me you top 10 prime time programs and they will tell me everything I need to know about the dreams and values of that society.

SO...this is my somewhat fanciful way of stating that the greatest obstacle to television (and radio) preservation is the general public's (and at time the TV industry's) own disregard for what it watches and listens to. The "Oh-it's-just-TV" syndrome.

Museum's such as mine exist to place broadcasting in context and, therefore, hopefully, illustrate to the public its importance and vitality.

SECONDLY:

I hope that 100 years from now, the programs of today--of last night, last week, last year--will be around for future generations to not only enjoy but to learn from. For television programs (fictional and non-fictional) are important artifacts worthy of saving--as important as covered wagons, as model T's, or any other device we have ever had that has gotten us from There to Here.

But, as any of us sitting here today can tell you much of our television legacy has already been lost. Hundreds of hours of early television are just . . . gone. Early sporting events, Johnny Carson's first "Tonight" shows, work by Dave Garroway and work by Chicago's own Jim Conway and Irv "Kup" Kupcinec . . . again, gone. And after several nationwide searches conducted by the estate of David Susskind and myself, we have also determined that much of the late Mr. Susskind's work from the 1950s and 1960s also no longer exists.

Tapes and films of early television--for a variety of reasons--were reused or thrown out. Used, used up and forgotten--we went through them all as carelessly and recklessly as we once did with fossil fuel.

While things are somewhat better today, many programs today by many local stations and a few cable networks are produced one day and discarded, if not the next, then soon after.

So often the reason for their discarding is relatively simple: stations don't have the space to store yesterday's programs or the time to organize them all. That's where repositories like the Museum of Broadcast Communications--and its siblings--come in.

It is our mission not only to welcome the orphaned and to organize the unorganized BUT also to make these programs available--once again--for viewing to general audiences. Letting them use television and its many genres as resources for research--as dependable as a World Book encyclopedia and as available as their local public library.

But increasingly, we are finding we can't carry out this mission alone. And we can't do it without greater support from the industry we are trying to preserve, analyze and celebrate. While the major national networks, cable organizations and local stations have been wonderfully generous in terms of donating tapes of programs they no longer wish to house they, as for profit organizations, have not always assisted us, as not for profits, in the next step of program preservation. That is, the financial backing it takes to see to that program's long shelf life (i.e. its transfer from one video format to another; its storage in proper containers and environmentally controlled storage).

The NBC's founder and president, Bruce DuMont, has likened the situation to parent and child: if a company/network gives birth to a production they should see to it as well that that program endures and enjoys a long and prosperous lifespan.

This situation is not solely the problem of the TV industry. No less an authority than Jane Alexander, head of the National Endowment of the Arts, has publicly criticized the motion picture industry for its frequent lack of concern for its own product after it has left the neighborhood theater.

Institutions like ours will not for very much longer be able to accept large quantities of tapes and films (and if we won't be able to accept them, who will?) without greater financial support from the industry that created them. As many institutions--including mine--have learned, having the world's biggest backlog of uncataloged, untransferred film and videotape is no longer a worthwhile or responsible goal.

I'm happy to report that the industry is--shall we say--coming around

I am very pleased to announce publicly for the first time that the National Broadcasting Company has recently donated to the Museum of Broadcast Communications monies for the transfer of hundreds of "Tomorrow" shows featuring Tom Snyder. These landmark interview shows of the 1970s and early 1980s contain one on one interviews with some of the greatest scholars and artists of this century. These funds from NBC will allow us to transfer these programs off the dreaded 2" videotape format--the dinosaur of the videotape industry--and onto a new format with a greater shelf life. In doing so they will also--for the first time since they were originally aired--be available for viewing by our patrons.

In addition, the Wrigley Company, the Chicago-based gum manufacturer, recently turned over to the Museum its vast collection of radio programs of the 1930s and 1940s AND the money necessary to transfer these programs off of electronic

transcription disk.

All our problems have not been solved however: one of the MBC's largest holdings, the David Susskind Collection, still sits in the safe storage of the Museum--waiting to be transferred; a treasure chest waiting to be opened.

THIRDLY:

As we have heard recently--from both sides of the political spectrum--the "days of big government are over." So I do not look to governments, federal or local, to be the solution to the financial side of our perseveration problems. However, I would like to see television preservation given greater priority as government grants are distributed in areas of the humanities and off/for historical preservation. By publicly making the preservation of the moving image a priority, governing bodies can lead by example; illustrating to the nation the value of our collective video memories--memories saved and shared.

A case in point: recently, our museum with grants from the Illinois Arts Council was able to make accessible to our patrons over 500 episodes of the program "Image Union." "Image Union" is a ten year-old program produced by our local PBS station, WTTW. It is a showcase for video artists and documentarians. Always on the cutting edge, these programs are the road map to the future of the medium. And through the foresight of WTTW--which saved them long after they were originally aired--and the Illinois Arts Council--which recognized their ongoing value--these programs are now preserved and available for viewing at the Museum of Broadcast Communications.

FOURTHLY:

Along with financial support from the industry leaders, public companies; and leadership provided by our governments (local and federal) we can also bring into the equation of television and video preservation the private citizen.

Recently Radio Hall of Fame member, radio historian, and MBC Vice President Chuck Schaden launched a grassroots campaign to raise money for the remastering of his vast vintage radio collection. It has been spectacularly successful. The generosity of the nation, of fans of Mr. Schaden and the collection he has devoted his life to, has been wonderful to watch. And in many, many ways the perseveration of the medium may ultimately rest with the fans--the Trekkies, the X-Filers, the lovers of Lucy. It is their devotion after all that has made Museums like mine possible at all. And it is for them that we serve.

So, in conclusion, it is with greater communication between the archival community; much greater support from the broadcasting and cable industry; government support and leadership; and the welcomed involvement of the private sector that we move into the future. Indeed, that we have a future at all.



**MUSEUM OF BROADCAST COMMUNICATIONS
ARCHIVES**

TITLE:

TIME: [Hours:Minutes]

TAPE NUMBER: TV-

PRODUCED BY:

COPYRIGHT:

DONOR:

AIR DATE:

NETWORK/STATION:

TYPE OF SHOW:

TOPICS/NAMES:

- | | |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6. |
| 2. | 7. |
| 3. | 8. |
| 4. | 9. |
| 5. | 10. |

SUMMARY:

(B&W) (Color) (Color and B&W)

[Commercials included] [No commercials]

WRITTEN BY:

DATE:

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
MAR 21 1996
STION PICTURES, BROADCAST
& RECORDING DIVISION

25A7

THE SCREENING SHEET

TITLE: This should be the title as it appears on the screen. If the show is part of a series and there is a title for the specific episode as well as for the series then list both and use a colon followed by two spaces.

Example: "Dick Van Dyck Show, The: October Eve"
"Masterpiece Theater: Talking Heads"

Please note that the prefix "The," like "A" or "An," comes after the title.

TIME: One hour is listed as "1:00." Half an hour is listed as ":30" and so on. (Note not to write "0:30.") Always round up (i.e. if a program lasts ":33" minutes, round up and write in ":35").

TAPE NUMBER: This is the number which is listed on each tape as assigned by the cataloger. Usually it will be a four-digit number. If a tape contains more than one program then the first show is listed as .1, the second as .2 and so on. All television tapes begin with "TV-" and radio tapes begin with "RA-."

PRODUCED BY: The producer's name, if available. It will be listed in the credits at the beginning or end of the show. List the last name first. Many shows today have multiple producers with differing job titles like Associate Producer, Co-Producer, Line Producer, etc. When in doubt, list only name(s) of Executive Producer(s). If there are multiple names listed as Executive Producer, list first two and write "et. al." after.

COPYRIGHT: Usually found at the end of the credits. This is often hard to read but do your best. Do not use Roman numerals and if possible list both the date and the copyright holder.

Example: "1954/Warner Brothers"
"1982/ABC"
"1961/Four Star Productions"

Please use the slash mark to divide the date from the company.

DONOR: The donor is not always the station or the network that the show was broadcast on. Ask before you list the donor of the program. When in doubt, leave blank.

AIR DATE: This number should be written in numerals and with dashes such as: "6/11/94." This number should be listed on the label of the tape you are screening. If not listed, ask. If we don't have the actual date we will list the month and/or year that the program first ran. Most programs are copyrighted and broadcast in the same year. If we cannot pinpoint even the year, we will list the total years the series ran.

Example: 1954-57

These dates can be found in almost any of the reference books in the Archives.

NETWORK/STATION: If this is not listed on the tape label and not on the program itself, check a reference book for the information. Always add the suffix "-TV" to local stations and the four major networks.

Example: "WGN-TV" not "WGN"
"CBS-TV" not "CBS"

For local stations (Chicago and elsewhere), always list its location (city and state) after its call letters. Place this information in parathesis.

Example: "WTTW-TV (Chicago, IL)"

Consult MBC standarized list of networks and their abbreviations to answer questions or solve problems.

Networks should be written with "-TV" afterwards as well.

Example: "NBC-TV"

However, this does not apply to PBS which should just be written "PBS."

TYPE OF SHOW: This should come from the MBC's standardized list of possible categories. Choose only one category. If a show seems to fit into more than one genre, ask for assistance. Use the catch-all catagory "Other" only when totally necessary.

TOPICS/NAMES: List issues, organizations, place names, concepts and/or subjects.

Example: "Animation"
"Civil Rights"
"Drugs"
"New York"

"Math"
"Politics"
"Education"

It is often a good idea to consult the database to see how other programs similar to the one you are screening have been entered in the computer. List the names of individuals who appear and place the last name first.

Example: "Ball, Lucille"

Don't be too familiar in writing names. For example, write "Evans, Timothy" not "Evans, Tim."

Some shows (like a talk show) may have only one or two Topics/Names, others may have fifty or more Topics/Names. List any fictional characters which is extremely well known and who is not listed in the title.

Example: "Mickey Mouse"

(Put names in quotes. This will allow patrons interested in these characters to find them.)

A good rule of thumb to use is to think about a patron coming to the Museum and wanting to find this program or this type of information. What words would he or she be most likely to type into the computer? What areas of research would they be most realistically interested in? Please be sure to write neatly and spell things correctly.

SUMMARY: Right a blurb which describes the story of the program or the area and issues that are addressed (as in a documentary). Please strive for complete, logical sentences which convey information as concisely as possible. Do not repeat the show title in the summary (if you can help it). Do not repeat Topic/Names which are listed under Topics/Names (if you can help it). Feel free to use the character's names if necessary. Please be sure to spell words and names correctly. For additional guidelines consult summaries already in the database. (A special note about screening fictional shows and sports--please don't give everything away. Do not list who wins the big baseball game or who the killer is on "Murder, She Wrote.")

(B&W) (Color) (Color and B&W): Circle one. Some shows, like documentaries, will include both color and black and white footage.

(Commercials included) (No commercials): Circle one. (Even one commercial within a program equals "Commercials Included.")

WRITTEN BY: Your name. (You filled out the screening sheet.)

DATE: The date you filled out the screening sheet.

SPECIAL CASES

Abbreviations: Please write out the entire name of the thing. Please do not abbreviate except in the cases of Inc. or Co. Also, please write Parent's Teacher's Association instead of PTA and write Klu Klux Klan rather than KKK. There are a few exceptions to this rule, such as:

Example: AIDS (can be entered as only letters)

Write these abbreviations without periods. However, initials which are people's name should contain periods.

Example: B.J. Thomas (note that no extra space is needed)

And: Please always right out the full word instead of using "&." Use the "&" only when its part of a proper name.

Example: musical group "Chad & Jeremy"

Cities: Always follow name of town or city with its state's postal code abbreviation: "Galesburg, IL."

"Doctor": See Titles.

Junior (Jr.): For men (and occasionally women) whose name ends with "Junior" such as Sammy Davis Jr. or Martin Luther King Jr. enter as follows using commas to separate:

Example: "Davis, Sammy, Jr."
"King, Martin Luther, Jr."

Musical Groups, Etc.: "The" should always come after the name of the band, such as: "Rolling Stones, The".

Proper Names and Titles of Works: Book, film, TV show titles, etc., when part of a Topics/Name should be written in quotes. For example, for a documentary on the making of "Gone With the Wind," "Gone With the Wind" should be a Topic/Name.

Royalty: List royal title first followed by first name.

Example: "Queen Elizabeth II of England"
"Princess Diana of Wales"

Sports Teams: Local teams should be listed just by their team name ("Cubs," "White Sox," etc.). Non-local teams should be prefaced by their city or state name ("St. Louis Cardinals," "Green Bay Packers," etc.)

Titles: Leave off titles be they ceremonial or reflective of one's education or status (except in matters of royalty).

Example: "Spock, Benjamin," omitting "Dr."
"Hiller, Wendy," omitting "Dame"
"Reagan, Ronald," omitting "President"

