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Archives Advisory Committees

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Genesis of a Profession

Origins of the Film and Television Archives Advisory Committees

WILLIAM T. MURPHY

On November 1, 1990, in a small but crowded meeting room at the Oregon Historical Society, the assembled archivists, librarians, curators, preservationists, and other interested persons formally resolved to establish the Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA). They had come to Portland to attend what would be the last annual conference of the joint Film Archives Advisory Committee and the Television Archives Advisory Committee, more familiarly known as FAAC/TAAC (also, in writing, as F/TAAC). The Future of F/TAAC Committee had moved the formalization process forward by working on a mission statement and drafting bylaws, subsequently approved by the membership, and the rest, as they say, is history. Today, after some twenty years since its founding, the successor to F/TACC has become the premier professional organization for individuals, institutions, and enterprises that share an appreciation of moving images as an essential part of our cultural heritage and a desire to safeguard and preserve them well into the future.¹

Many current AMIA members who participated in F/TAAC no doubt recall the modest steps that were taken to address the informational needs of an ever-growing number of archives, libraries, and museums that had custody of large film and videotape collections. Since the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, the field had grown dramatically, a growth reflected in today's AMIA membership numbers and in the services the organization offers to the archival community, ranging from basic training workshops to demonstrations of the latest digital applications.

EARLY YEARS

Several precedents mark the beginning of professionalization in moving image preservation and access, an audiovisual field that, in reality, encompasses many disciplines in

the humanities, sciences, and technology. A reasonable place to start is with the idea that cultural institutions should take responsibility for collecting film and television materials along with traditional archival formats. Accepting large rolls of paper prints beginning in 1894 as copyright deposit copies for motion pictures was a landmark acquisition for the Library of Congress (LOC). So, too, was its acceptance of the first television program for copyright in 1949. Other institutions, such as the National Archives and MoMA, started collecting motion pictures in the 1930s, and on a broader level, the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF), established in 1938, served the needs of its member archives, which, after the intrusion of World War II, contributed to professionalization on an international scale. As will be discussed, it was the American FIAF-affiliated archives that, in effect, formed the initial archives advisory committee or Film Archives Advisory Committee group.

FAAC traces its origins primarily to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the American Film Institute (AFI), established in 1965 and 1967, respectively, whose relationship required participation of the major nitrate motion picture film archives. This select group included the AFI, which acted as the secretariat, the George Eastman House (GEH), MoMA, and the LOC. Subsequently, the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), became a participant, and the National Archives and Records Service (NARS; National Archives and Records Administration [NARA] after 1985) became an observer because, as an agency of the executive branch, it could not accept NEA funding. To minimize competition and avoid duplication of effort, this core group of advisers initially convened to rationalize acquisition and collections policies among their own institutions. During most of the 1970s, the committee advised NEA on funding levels for film preservation for their own institutions, until the process was changed to allow peer review. NEA later funded other major AFI projects that were administered by its National Center for Film and Video Preservation, established in 1983. As the former center director, Gregory Lukow described it as follows: "By the late 1970s, when NEA grants advisory rules changed, FAAC changed from a group advising the NEA to a group whose expanding

membership 'advised' and shared information among themselves."²

NEA's crucial role is incontestable in the context of motion picture film, first in nitrate film preservation and second in cinema education, and arguably much less so in television and video preservation. Leading a media campaign promoting American cinema as a major art form, AFI's first director, George Stevens Jr., and others brought public attention to huge losses of American movies, in particular of silent films, and successfully persuaded the NEA to establish annual funding for film preservation. Film preservation was defined as copying nitrocellulose reels to safety cellulose triacetate negatives, master positives, and prints. As carried out by the nitrate film archives, silent entertainment or fiction films became the national preservation priority almost to the exclusion of other film genres, not to mention television. In sum, it is fair to say that the first FAAC group formed a relatively narrow base, as measured by its lion's share of NEA funding and by its specialized priorities and interests.

Even so, within the committee, this could have been a fairly competitive or contentious process because of overlapping collections policies with respect to silent films. More difficult to resolve were preservation needs always much greater than available funding, a situation that still remains sadly familiar. Nonetheless, with help from AFI's good offices, during the early 1970s, grant recipients met informally to discuss their priorities and advise NEA on funding they could effectively expend. Printing capacities were a constant constraint, exacerbated by film lab closings. Having to match NEA preservation grants effectively served as another constraint. Owing to a subsequent change in federal rules, LOC stopped accepting NEA funding but, joined by NARA, continued to participate in the archives advisory committee meetings as an observer. Among the archives, only LOC and NARA were fortunate enough not only to receive annual appropriations from Congress but to operate their own motion picture labs.

Facilitated by the AFI, representatives of the nitrate film archives then formed the initial basis of FAAC. Dr. Sam Kula, hired from the BFI, who, along with Stevens, traveled around the

country promoting the newly established AFI, initially managed its preservation portfolio. He was succeeded by Dr. Lawrence Karr, who then acted as the committee's secretary. Eileen Bowser and Mary Lea Bandy from MoMA, James Card and John Kuiper from GEH, and Paul Spehr from LOC provided continuity from meeting to meeting. Karr's diplomacy in managing the roundtable discussions helped minimize potential institutional conflicts as well as mollify differences that would surface from time to time. After all, as a rather select group of film scholars and aficionados, they were like pioneers very accustomed to thinking independently, searching to find solutions and best practices for the films in their care and establishing ground rules for a nascent profession.

Based on a roundtable format, a typical FAAC session followed a loosely assembled agenda, often adjusted even on meeting days. Whoever suggested an agenda topic took responsibility for introducing it, while others added what they knew or made recommendations for follow-up. Agendas included important topics such as reports of diacetate (low-acetyl) film deterioration, color dye fading, inadequacy of videotape as a surrogate for film, and archives administrative matters. Given the restrictive discussion format, few topics could be presented in depth, and occasionally, there was a sense of finality about views and opinions, as though nothing more remained to be said.

By the late 1970s, FAAC came into usage as a familiar acronym that described a group of potential grant recipients because NEA began to recognize that additional institutions had meritorious film preservation needs. The AFI therefore invited other archives and libraries to participate in the meetings as representatives of their institutions. Individual professionals who just represented themselves—for example, film collectors or commercial service or product suppliers—were purposely excluded. This restriction on participation became a significant issue for discussion in planning the new AMIA as a professional association, which, in the end, was opened for membership to everyone who subscribed to its goals, whether interested members were individual or institutional, commercial or nonprofit.

Accordingly, FAAC agendas were expanded

to include not only recent acquisitions and nitrate film conversion projects, which dominated in the beginning, but a range of subjects broadly applicable to the field. The agenda for the March 1980 annual conference included a report from the past FIAF Congress and the seminal UNESCO Resolution for Safeguarding and Preserving the Moving Image Heritage. Other topics included restoration projects, an increase in lab prices, silver recovery, and an “update on the lab situation,” an oblique reference to numerous motion picture lab closings in the wake of videotape inroads. Collecting strategies, principles of selection, and internal administrative practices were also discussed. In addition to customary social events, evening screenings of newly preserved films became a regular part of the program.

By 1980, FAAC included several new member archives: the Anthology Film Archives, the American Archives of the Factual Film (at Iowa State University), Cinematheque Quebecoise, the National Archives of Canada, and the University of Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. The NEA sent representatives, as did the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), which became the major funding organization for the preservation of local television news. The welcome participation of Canadian archives became a permanent feature of FAAC, TAAC, and later, AMIA.

TAAC EVOLVES

The television and video archives movement sprouted up all over North America as a much-needed response to the general use of videotape for education and documentation as well as entertainment. In 1957, Ampex introduced commercial videotape as primarily a studio format, but it was not until the introduction of affordable Electronic Industries Association of Japan open reels and U-matic cassettes in the 1970s that videotape libraries became ubiquitous outside network television. In addition, a major revision of American copyright law in 1976 encouraged off-air taping of hard news broadcasts and established within the LOC the American Television and Radio Archives. Media scholar Erik Barnouw, the library’s new chief of the Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division, organized a television archives

conference in 1978. LOC and the AFI sponsored a moving image cataloging conference the same year. Also during this period, UCLA formed an alliance with the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (ATAS), and the Museum of Broadcasting was founded in New York with a little help from William Paley. Finally, it is worth noting that the network television news off-air video project at Vanderbilt University, started amid the tumultuous presidential election campaign of 1968, preceded all these activities.³

The first TAAC conference took place in Washington, D.C., in January 1979 under the auspices of the AFI, which still acted as secretariat and facilitator, but in contrast to earlier FAAC meetings, there was no money to recommend to needful television and video archives. The core institutions consisted of ATAS, AFI, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, CBS News, International Museum of Photography-GEH, LOC, the Museum of Broadcasting, MoMA, NARS and its NHPRC, the National Film Archives of Canada, NBC News, PBS, UCLA, the University of Georgia Peabody Collection, and the University of Wisconsin. In attendance were forty-five participants, observers, and guests.

Presenting institutional profiles took up a good part of the first day. This was probably a good idea at first because few people had any idea of the variety of efforts that were undertaken among repositories across the country. In the interest of saving time for more substantive discussions, these presentations were soon eliminated from future programs but distributed as briefing papers in conference handouts. Regardless of presentation format, these profiles helped members appreciate the breadth and diversity of collections nationwide and the sincerity of interests in learning more about the archiving of television and related materials. Discussion focused on such subjects as cataloging and network and local television news archives. A lawyer from the Copyright Office spoke about the provision for fair use in the new copyright law. Sam Kula, representing the National Film Archives of Canada, described ramifications of the draft UNESCO resolution that were applicable to film and television materials. Larry Hackman first announced that local television materials fell within the funding interests of NHPRC. Kula and Robert Rosen (UCLA) submitted a draft

statement that, after its acceptance, more or less outlined the philosophical and operating guidelines for TAAC, which would last until the founding of AMIA. Essentially, it described TAAC as a forum for a consortium of institutions, advisory in nature, that avoided taking stands on issues. No formal leadership was intended as such—there was only a two-year assignment as secretary or facilitator—and host institutions would act as chairs of the conferences. All proposed agenda items were categorically acceptable. The requirement for institutional membership was very deliberate, in part a veiled reference to a television collector who had published a newsletter that unfortunately gave the appearance of speaking for TAAC members.

Throughout the 1980s, FAAC and TAAC met jointly, and as word spread, attendance increased, more or less, year after year. Thus, as the program became an increasingly complex endeavor, agenda responsibility gradually shifted from the AFI and the conference host institution to a formal program committee. An effective program, for example, had to address interests in motion picture film and in television and video. Fortunately, some panel topics, such as appraisal, cataloging, and reference services, applied across the board. As a concession to the FIAF-member nitrate archives (LOC, MoMA, GEH, UCLA, and the AFI), blocks of conference time were always set aside for their use. Other FIAF associate members (not full members) also participated in these meetings, including the Wisconsin Center, the Smithsonian Human Studies Film Archive, and NARA. So, too, did the two Canadian full members: the National Archives of Canada and the Cinéma-Québécois.

The F/TAAC conference of 1981 used two locations: one day devoted to television and video topics at the LOC and two days for cross-over and film-related issues at the National Archives. As an indication of growing complexity, there was an unwieldy agenda consisting of thirty-five items. The LOC again hosted a joint meeting in May 1986, which more than 125 persons attended.

Even more complicated were conference logistics, which fell solely on the shoulders of the poor soul who volunteered an institution as

a conference host. In reality, the conferences were becoming too large to fit conveniently within a host institution, where meeting room capacities, audiovisual services, 35mm theaters, and other amenities, such as food and refreshments, along with requirements for special diets, were problematic. Screenings were also becoming a problem because of their accumulative running time and the increasing quantity of submissions. Finally, bus transportation and travel time to venues added to the complexity of preparations.

Hosting and planning for a F/TAAC conference became almost a full-time occupation in the last few weeks before the event. For reasons that seem too obvious to mention, these arrangements had many drawbacks and could not conceivably remain commensurate with the phenomenal growth of institutional and professional interest in F/TAAC's work.

By the mid-1980s, FAAC and TAAC were inextricably intertwined. Presentations, papers, and panel discussions became much more substantial than the earlier roundtable discussions. Participants delivered presentations on archival subjects that still have application today such as film and tape enclosures, storage surveys, and cold storage standards. Outside experts were invited as guest speakers. To further its objectives, F/TAAC established working groups based around natural affinities such as cataloging and documentation, local television archives, subject-oriented collections, and independent collections. As an accommodation to the nitrate film archives, a working group was established for FIAF member institutions. In 1983, under its new incarnation, the National Center for Film and Video Preservation (NCFVP), the AFI preservation office continued to provide invaluable administrative assistance to F/TAAC and also to the field, enlarging the National Moving Image Database and preparing for publication the new volumes of the monumental AFI Catalog. The center also solicited input for and edited, published, and distributed the quarterly *F/TAAC Newsletter*, beginning with the summer 1988 issue. None too fancy, the newsletters always contained interesting announcements of acquisitions and archival projects, grant awards, job opportunities, and conference information, and they provided an addi-



Figure 1. Larry Viskochil of the Chicago Historical Society, speaking amid the deco splendor of the Eden Roc Hotel at the 1989 F/TAAC conference in Miami. Photo courtesy Gregory Lukow.

tional forum for discussion of F/TAAC's future.

At the same time, important events took place outside of or perhaps despite F/TAAC that helped to galvanize the television and video archives movement, if not film archives, toward some kind of formalization. Funded by an NHPRC grant to the NCFVP, in October 1989, the State Historical Society of Wisconsin hosted the Local Television News Conference, attended by about seventy persons, most representing different organizations. The National Film Preservation Act of 1988 established the National Film Preservation Board within the LOC. In May 1989, the Annenberg Roundtable on Television Preservation, coordinated by Fay Schreiber (Museum of Jewish Heritage) and Dr. Sam Surratt (CBS News Archives), in response to a justifiably perceived crisis in television preservation, "brought together key decision makers from government, the television and motion picture industry, the video technology industry, academia, and the philanthropic community."⁴

The penultimate F/TAAC conference, held in Miami in 1989 and chaired and hosted by Steve Davidson, director of the Louis Wolfson II Media History Center, was by all accounts a very successful meeting, owing to the program's substance and Miami Beach's pleasant

amenities. Robert Gitt's presentation about the history of color film was a memorable highlight. But it was in Miami that F/TAAC planted the seeds of its own demise. In a manner of speaking, the informal group became a victim of its own success. It was introduced by the question of formalization. The Future of F/TACC Committee was assigned the task of developing a questionnaire to gauge views in the field. At this point, lacking a consensus about F/TAAC's future, opinions and sentiments seemed to be divided along two general lines. Briefly summarized, on one side were those who felt well served by F/TAAC's informality and remained opposed to the bureaucracies, committees, and bylaws that would inexorably follow with formalization. After all, they argued, the informal meetings still generated timely and valuable information and facilitated archives networking. Some representatives of the nitrate film archives leaned in this direction based on their specialty and their fallback to

FIAF, which always remained a source of professional information, developing standards, and best practices.

Yet on the other side of the line were those (this writer included) who felt that the profession had dramatically grown based on collections or acquisition policies that recognized moving images as a legitimate part of our cultural heritage to be preserved and that, owing to inherent vulnerabilities of film and videotape, there was a genuine need to exchange and disseminate professional information on a wider, more effective, and permanent basis. A consistent complaint at conferences pointed to the rehashing of introductory material for new participants who would have been better served by orientation workshops. By and large, for budgetary reasons and other constraints, this group could not count on participating in international associations like FIAF or in the International Federation of Television Archives, both of which only rarely convened in North America.

Although many F/TAAC participants, such as professional librarians or archivists, were also Society of American Archivists (SAA) members, it was felt that SAA did not offer substantial resources or program time for moving image archival issues. Don Neal, SAA's executive director, correctly emphasized that "archival work is archival work, what ever the medium, although there may be some special considerations that the medium imposes. Appraisal, description, reference—the knowledge and skills from these and other archival functions cut across differences of medium."⁵ He then described the benefits of SAA membership and raised the possibility of a roundtable for film and television archives. Nonetheless, although negotiations with SAA about the possibility of bringing F/TAAC under its umbrella were not unfriendly, no material cooperation ever took place.

The formalization issue also left criteria for membership unresolved, that is to say, institutional or individual, for profit or nonprofit. As helpful as the AFI center had been in nurturing F/TAAC's growth, its future role as an ad hoc secretariat was also left uncertain.

As encouraged by the Future of F/TACC Committee, a few members expressed their

opinions in the *F/TAAC Newsletter*. With due modesty, I quote some of my own words:

[F/TAAC] served a useful purpose when meetings were small and archives were few in number. Over the last few years, however, several important changes have taken place. Meetings have grown into large scale conferences. Moving image archives have grown by leaps and bounds, becoming at the same time more diverse and specialized than ever before. Numerous archivists have entered the field, creating a huge demand for information and training brought on by the challenge of changing technologies.

I went on to describe the advantages of a formal organizational structure, including national recognition as an authoritative source of information regarding preservation of moving images, nationwide coordination, specialized committee work, fund-raising, training venues, and awards recognition.⁶ (See Figure 2 for additional positions on the future of F/TAAC excerpted from the 1989 newsletter.)

The Future of F/TACC Committee conducted several meetings in 1989 and 1990 in preparation for the annual conference in Portland, and it reported its progress in the newsletter. It looked into many practical aspects of establishing a new professional association, including a preliminary mission statement, by-laws on organizational structure and functions, membership criteria, dues, voting eligibility, incorporation or tax exemption, working groups, and the continuing relationship with the AFI, a relationship that, in one form or another, lasted more than twenty years.

Beginning in the late 1960s, these events set the stage for the 1990 meeting in Portland, which led to the steps that established AMIA. In Portland, the attendees voted to change the group's name from F/TAAC to AMIA and launched a series of formalization steps that would lead to the first official AMIA conference, which took place in New York City in 1991, as described by Jan-Christopher Horak in his contribution to this issue. So the Portland conference began as an F/TAAC meeting and ended as an AMIA meeting, paving the way

F/TAAC NEWSLETTER

The Film and Television Archives
Advisory Committee Newsletter is
coordinated by the National Center
for Film and Video Preservation at
The American Film Institute.

Issue 5 Summer 1989

MIAMI F/TAAC MEETING

F/TAAC MEETING UPDATE:

NEWS AND DOCUMENTARY COLLECTIONS
WORKING GROUP: A meeting room has
been reserved at the Eden Roc Hotel
on Tuesday, October 31, for members
of the News and Documentary
Collections Working Group (formerly
the Local Television News Archives
Working Group) who would like to
have an additional day of
discussions. Please contact Steve
Davidson at the Louis Wolfson
Center by AUGUST 10 if you plan to
attend. Please indicate whether

you will be able to attend all day
Tuesday (9:00-5:00) or only a half
day (1:00-5:00). Also, please
provide any specific topics you
would like to see placed on the
final agenda for this Working
Group.

Registration forms and hotel
information for the 1989 F/TAAC
meeting in Miami were mailed out in
early June. A questionnaire on
working group preferences and
screening submissions was also
included in the registration
packet.

The conference registration forms
should be completed and returned to
Steve Davidson at the Louis Wolfson
II Media History Center no later
than SEPTEMBER 1. Please contact
Steve Davidson or the National
Center for further information.

PLEASE NOTE: Hotel reservations are
made directly with the Eden Roc's
Reservation Department. The hotel
needs a confirmed reservation 60
days prior to the opening of the
meeting -- by SEPTEMBER 1 -- in
order to guarantee the special
rates they are offering the F/TAAC

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Figure 2. Excerpts from issue 5
(summer 1989) of the *F/TAAC
Newsletter*, featuring Richard
Prelinger, William Murphy,
and Sarah Richards expressing
a variety of positions on the
future of F/TAAC. Courtesy
Newsfilm Collections, Moving
Image Research Collections,
University of South Carolina.

group. Also, the earlier you make
your reservations the better room
selection you will be offered.
After SEPTEMBER 1, the hotel will
release the block of 100 rooms it
has held for F/TAAC and the rooms
as well as the rates will be open
to seasonal demands.

IMPORTANT--VENUE CHANGE: All
General and Working Group Sessions
on Thursday November 2
will take place at the WOLFSON
CENTER. As the tentative schedule
you received shows, all other days
we will meet in the Eden Roc Hotel.

CORRECTION: The portion of the
registration form for the Tuesday
October 31 FIAF-MEMBER ARCHIVES
WORKING GROUP meeting incorrectly
stated "for F/TAAC-Members and
Observers only." It should have
read "for FIAF-Members and
Observers only."

exchange of opinions and ideas on
the issue. Several Committee
members agreed to submit signed
position statements for inclusion
in the Newsletter. The Committee
also requested that the F/TAAC
field at large be encouraged to
participate in this process by
submitting statements of opinions,
concerns or questions for inclusion
in the Newsletter.

Included below are several
additional statements received on
this topic, including comments by
two members of the Future of F/TAAC
Committee, William Murphy and Sarah
Richards.

Final statements and responses will
also be accepted for the Fall issue
of the Newsletter, to be published
in October. All submissions for
this issue should be sent to the
National Center by SEPTEMBER 15,
1989.

***** POSITION STATEMENTS:

FUTURE OF F/TAAC

Comments by RICHARD PRELINGER,
Prelinger Associates, Inc.:

The Future of F/TAAC Committee
continued deliberation on the
Future of F/TAAC survey, which will
be distributed to the field in the
coming weeks.

The question has been raised by the
field as to whether a formal
organization with officers and
by-laws should be established,
whether F/TAAC should join the
Society of American Archivists, or
whether the needs of the field can
be met by continuing to develop
F/TAAC as an informally organized
group.

The Future of F/TAAC Committee
agreed to utilize the F/TAAC
Newsletter as a forum for the

"Has F/TAAC really formulated a
group agenda requiring the
structure and clout that a formal
organization might provide?
Although this may be a legitimate
future objective, if members
desire, I doubt the group has
reached this point."

"There are great benefits to an
informally organized group. I
suspect that formalities and
by-laws tend to increase the
distance between the most active
participants (who tend to become
officers) and those less involved
or simply too busy to participate
regularly. It's a big plus to have
an informal, all-inclusive meeting
bringing together representatives
from a wide range of organizations,

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and once a year is an appropriate frequency."

"Informality has its difficulties, too. I've noticed that meetings often tend to cover the same ground, in part because of the recent membership increase (of which I am a part) and the consequent interest in basic concepts of moving image archival practice. Would there be any interest in instituting some sort of orientation program directed at newer members, especially those representing smaller archives and collections? Such a program might attempt to impart the best available information on practices, procedures and technology, and aim to develop a body of knowledge for all to share. In this way, the information overhead that now clogs many sessions (and is, no doubt, repetitious to some) could be diminished."

Comments by WILLIAM T. MURPHY, National Archives and Records Administration:

"F/TAAC emerged from the genuine needs of film and television archives. It served a useful purpose when meetings were small and archives were few in number. Over the last few years, however, several important changes have taken place. Meetings have grown into large scale conferences. Moving image archives have grown by leaps and bounds, becoming at the same time more diverse and specialized than ever before. Numerous archivists have entered the field, creating a huge demand for information and training brought on by the challenge of changing technologies. There is more competition for scarce funding; film and television preservation priorities are in conflict."

"In view of these changes F/TAAC as presently constituted faces the real danger of becoming irrelevant. The establishment of the National Film Preservation Board and the recently held Annenberg Roundtable on Television Preservation have already underscored its irrelevancy at the national level."

"F/TAAC needs a formal structure to accommodate the growing number of moving image archives and the professionals that service them. The principal advantages of a formal structure can only be outlined in the limited space available here."

1. National recognition as an umbrella organization for moving image archives and as a collective source for responsible and authoritative views and policies concerning the preservation of moving images.
2. Coordination of moving image preservation on a nationwide basis.
3. The ability, based on the work of specialized committees, to produce standards, manuals, bibliographies, and other useful publications in order to encourage the application of safe and effective techniques for the preservation of moving images.
4. The ability, based on non-profit status, to apply for, solicit, or raise funds for preservation, training, exhibition, travel support, and other worthwhile activities.
5. The ability to foster professionalism among moving image archivists through meetings, training workshops, exchange of information, and other appropriate means.
6. Recognition of achievement by moving image archives or by individual archivists, recognition that will serve a purpose within

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each of our institutions as well as within the profession at large.

7. Enhanced understanding by the heads of our institutions and by the public of the importance and priority of safeguarding and preserving the moving image heritage.

8. Better justification for travel support in order to attend meetings.

"These advantages deliberately emphasize preservation over other aspects of moving image archives, because preservation remains the most compelling objective that unites our interests, regardless of the variety of collections held by F/TAAC affiliates. A formal structure will help make these advantages a reality. Accepting F/TAAC's relative inertia unhappily impedes nationwide progress toward preserving our moving image culture and heritage."

See comments by Sarah L. Richards, National Library of Medicine, on following two pages.

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Comments by:
Sarah L. Richards

DID YOU KNOW?

. . . that F/TAAC did not defend one of our most esteemed archivists and his archival practices from a reckless, offensive article in the New York Times, because we had no official representative to write a letter to the editor?

. . . that meeting organizers have trouble acquiring meeting and hotel rooms for F/TAAC, because we have no one to accept financial responsibility and no mechanism for accepting or spending money?

. . . that F/TAAC has so little prestige and visibility that we are not even listed in the Encyclopedia of Associations and were not consulted or appointed when the government created the National Film Preservation Board?

Big problems! How can we solve them? Electing a president, vice-president, treasurer, and secretary and using Robert's Rules of Order for the business part of the meetings would help.

Organizing formally will provide officials who could quickly respond to the media and who could receive correspondence. It will also allow us admittance to the Encyclopedia of Associations—a start on the road to recognition. Organizing formally gives us a mechanism for accepting and spending money and a structure for approving and distributing standards and information on preservation, etc. In time, we might even have a journal.

Yes, other methods may also solve some of these problems, but they would not give us A VOICE.

WE NEED A STRONG VOICE.

If you speak as the officer of a national organization, your voice carries more weight than it does as the representative of a single institution. If you are speaking as a representative of your own institution, the institute may silence or greatly restrict the action you may want to take on tough issues. It may not overtly tell you not to take action, you yourself, may feel it is politically unwise to do so, unless you do it under the banner of an unaffiliated national organization. Even the employees of the National Center for Film and Video Preservation must be careful not to offend their director and board members, administrators and board of the American Film Institute, and potential donors or supporters. However, as a national officer, you may tackle any issue.

Also important to remember--NO ONE CAN SPEAK FOR F/TAAC UNLESS THEY ARE CHOSEN BY AND ACCOUNTABLE TO THE MEMBERS OF F/TAAC. In other words, a representative must be elected or hired. That way we can monitor their behavior, and if they no longer represent us, we may fire them or elect a new official.

F/TAAC needs a strong voice--it needs officers who can speak and be monitored by the field, officers who can review and approve staff activities like newsletters, etc. F/TAAC needs to be a formal organization.

HOW DO YOU ORGANIZE? BY INSTITUTE OR INDIVIDUAL?

If we organize by institute, it means that:

. . . we are no longer free to speak for ourselves. Whenever we make a statement at the meetings,

we speak officially for our institutes.

. . . that the majority of attendees at the meetings may not vote for officers, approval of standards, meeting locations, or the focus and direction the organization will take.

If we organize by individual, it means that:

. . . each person represents himself when he wants to and represents his institution when he and his institution so desires.

. . . each person has a voice and votes for officers, etc., and will have a hand in the direction the organization takes.

. . . as there are more individuals than institutes, if the organization votes for dues, the treasury will be larger with more people to donate to it.

. . . the current structure is duplicated in the newly formed organization, thus allowing the continuation of free-flowing information and communication--F/TAAC's greatest asset.

NOTES:

Council of Institutions. If enough people believe there is a need for the heads of institutions to meet separately from the general sessions, a council of institutional heads could be created within F/TAAC. Meeting prior to the general F/TAAC sessions, the council would provide a forum for formal institutional communication while the general sessions would remain individually based.

Block Voting. There are those who believe that a large institute's members will gather together and vote in a bloc, thereby taking control of the organization. However, with secret ballots, no supervisor can see how their staff has voted. Coercion would be difficult, if not impossible. Additionally, there are enough individual members at large to outnumber any large institute who would even try to do this.

Undesirables. Some believe that if we are a group of individuals, a few undesirable people may wish to join. However, the archivists are, by far, the largest majority of the members and will outnumber any undesirables on votes. John Fleckner, President of the Society of American Archivists, says that product salesmen, etc. have never been a problem in the SAA. It will not be one for us either.

Goals. Regardless of whether we organize by institute or individual, our goals may be: establishing standards, publishing, lobbying, fund raising, organizing workshops and seminars, and expressing official positions. The Society of Motion Picture Television Engineers (SMPTe) and the Society of American Archivists (SAA) are individual-based associations and do pursue these goals.

HELP KEEP THE BEST F/TAAC HAS TO OFFER while making it a STRONG organization. PLEASE mark your ballot to ORGANIZE FORMALLY into an association of INDIVIDUALS.

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for the birth of AMIA in the months to come. Even though the only vote that took place there was to change the organization's name, it was clear in Portland that critical mass had been reached to establish AMIA as a stand-alone formal organization.

NOTES

1. The history described in this article is based on the author's recollections since he participated in many of the meetings described here. Gregory Lukow, surely one of the key participants for F/TAAC, the AFI Center, and AMIA, has kindly provided me with copies of the *F/TAAC Newsletter*, issues 1–10, now on file at the AMIA offices. Donna Ross, Library of Congress Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division, and Sara Meyerson, director of the ABC News Library (now retired), also supplied copies of agendas and other meeting materials. For a detailed history of the development of national policies toward the funding of moving image preservation, which frequently touches on the development of F/TAAC, see an excellent thesis by Sarah Ziebell Mann, "American

Moving Preservation, 1967–1987," MA thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 2000.

2. Gregory Lukow, e-mail correspondence with the author, April 26, 2010.

3. The Vanderbilt Television News Archive began off-air taping onto videocassettes of the three major network nightly newscasts beginning in September 1968. They continue this activity to this day (having later added PBS, Fox News, and CNN) and make the tapes available on- and off-site to interested researchers.

4. Fay Schreibman and Sam Surratt, "Roundtable on Television Preservation: Rapporteur Summary," May 19, 1989. From her days at the George Washington University Media Study Center, Schreibman was one of the leading advocates of television preservation. See her article "Searching for Television's History," in *Broadcast Research Methods*, ed. J. R. Dominick and J. E. Fletcher, 16–45 (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1985).

5. Neal's letter was published in *F/TAAC Newsletter*, no. 6 (Fall 1989): 3–4.

6. *F/TAAC Newsletter*, no. 5 (Summer 1989): 3–4.