LOCAL TELEVISION
A GUIDE TO SAVING OUR HERITAGE
The Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA) is a non-profit professional association established to advance the field of moving image archiving by fostering cooperation among individuals and organizations concerned with the acquisition, preservation, description, exhibition and use of moving image materials.

1313 North Vine Street
Hollywood, CA USA 90028
Phone: 323.463.1500
Fax: 323.463.1506
Email: AMIA@amianet.org
Visit our website: http://www.amianet.org

The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (NATAS) is a professional service organization for all aspects of the television, cable and satellite industries. Its symbol of excellence, the Emmy, is awarded in six major national categories and in twenty regional chapters for locally produced productions and individual craft achievements. Beyond awards, the National Television Academy has extensive educational projects, scholarships, publications, and major activities of impact to both industry professionals and the viewing public.

THE NATIONAL TELEVISION ACADEMY
111 West 57th Street, Suite 600
New York, NY 10019
Telephone: 212.586.8424
www.emmyonline.com

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INTRODUCTION

Local television stations are the pioneers of the television industry and, in a very vital way, the guardians of our local heritage. Since its beginnings in the 1940s, local television has kept communities across the United States informed about local news, issues, and entertainment while nurturing local talent and fostering new programming ideas.

Saving the products of local television, both broadcast and cable, from television’s beginnings in each community, is essential to preserving the history and culture of the United States. Preservation of local television is of enormous value in documenting the American experience and passing it on to future generations.

The Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA) recognizes the precarious state of local television footage that is held in stations and repositories throughout the country. Hundreds of stations hold vital film and video that could be preserved, reformatted, and reused to the advantage of the station itself, and by others for research, production, and entertainment. But given the demands of program production, daily signal distribution, and income generation, many stations are overwhelmed by the seemingly daunting task of saving their older footage as well as new programming.

This Guide is an effort to provide brief yet practical guidance in saving local television’s heritage. It is the culmination of a project carried out under the aegis of AMIA in association with the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (NATAS). The project has started a creative and productive dialog between television industry leaders and archivists, which will doubtless lead to greater local, regional, and national awareness of the value of local station collections. It will stimulate the formation of policies and processes that can work both for individual stations and for archives, historical societies, museums, and libraries. Local Television: “A Guide to Saving Our Heritage” is a practical resource designed for broadcasters, yet useful also to archivists, librarians, and curators.

This project was funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), the funding agency of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).
SECTION 1

20 QUESTIONS
WHAT'S YOUR STATION'S "HQ" (HERITAGE QUOTIENT)?

The first step in saving your local television heritage is to become familiar with the issues involved and to gauge your station's current situation. Discovering your station's "Heritage Quotient" - a rating of how your station deals with its vintage footage and programming - is a fun and easy way to do this.

So, what's your station's "Heritage Quotient"? To find out, simply check the twenty responses below that you think are the most accurate. Then, add up your points.

1. The vintage footage at our station would fill . . .
   - a few boxes. (1 point)
   - several shelves. (2 points)
   - a whole room. (3 points)

2. Of all the footage and programming we've produced in the past, we have kept . . .
   - either nothing or just what doesn't get thrown out or reused. (1 point)
   - everything. (2 points)
   - only materials that fit specific criteria. (3 points)

3. Of the footage and programming we're currently producing, the decision to keep any of it is . . .
   - purely accidental. (1 point)
   - a matter of staff preference. (2 points)
   - determined by specific guidelines. (3 points)

4. Besides the films or tapes themselves, we keep . . .
   - nothing. (1 point)
   - some documentation, but pretty much by accident. (2 points)
   - all associated logs, scripts, etc. (3 points)

5. Our vintage footage is described . . .
   - with a label, at best. (1 point)
   - in whatever paper or automated records happen to exist. (2 points)
   - completely, in a manual format or a searchable database. (3 points)

6. When we need to find footage, we . . .
   - throw up our hands. We really can't hope to find anything. (1 point)
   - learn the labels for dates or titles, or ask the old guy down the hall. (2 points)
   - search a database for names, topics, dates, etc. (3 points)

7. The chances of finding useful footage in our vintage materials are . . .
   - non-existent. (1 point)
   - so-so. We might dig for quite a while, but often find something. (2 points)
   - very good. (3 points)

8. Our vintage footage is stored in . . .
   - old cases, boxes or cans. Film is in little individual rolls. (1 point)
   - cases and cans. Film is on reels. (2 points)
   - new archival-quality containers. Film is on cores, free of masking tape and staples. (3 points)

   - wherever they happen to be. (1 point)
   - in one place that we don't use for anything else. (2 points)
   - in a physically and environmentally secure space. (3 points)

10. Access to our vintage materials is . . .
    - not possible. (1 point)
    - open and unregulated. Staff help themselves. (2 points)
    - controlled by specific procedures designed to protect the materials. (3 points)

11. We could make money with our vintage footage . . .
    - by getting rid of it. We're wasting money saving it. (1 point)
    - if we knew how. (2 points)
    - by exploiting it as a marketable commodity. (3 points)

12. In-house reuse of our vintage footage . . .
    - is discouraged, so it never happens. (1 point)
    - rarely happens. (2 points)
    - is encouraged. We use it whenever we see an appropriate application. (3 points)

13. We allow our vintage footage to be used by . . .
    - no one. (1 point)
    - our own staff only. (2 points)
    - anyone who has a need for it. (3 points)

14. For equipment, we have . . .
    - some of what we need to play our vintage footage. (1 point)
    - some of the right stuff, but not all. (2 points)
    - everything we need to play all of the formats we have. (3 points)

15. When we need to make a copy of something . . .
    - we can't, so we don't. (1 point)
    - we let the user borrow it and take care of it themselves. (2 points)
    - we take care of it by dubbing it in-house or outsourcing it. (3 points)

16. Funds for the maintenance of our vintage materials are . . .
    - non-existent. (1 point)
    - generally found on an as-needed basis. (2 points)
    - part of our regular operating budget. (3 points)

17. The best thing about our vintage materials is . . .
    - it is not an issue, and not in anyone's way. (1 point)
    - at least it's still with us, in case we ever need it. (2 points)
    - it is a valuable resource for our ongoing operation. (3 points)

18. The worst thing about our vintage materials is . . .
    - it is long gone. (1 point)
    - it is a financial drain. (2 points)
    - it is unidentified. (3 points)

19. We see our vintage materials as . . .
    - a liability to the station. (1 point)
    - great when we can make use of them, but that is only occasionally. (2 points)
    - some of our best resources. (3 points)

20. To better preserve and manage our vintage footage, we'd be most likely to . . .
    - do nothing. It's just not a priority. (1 point)
    - ask someone to it and try to make the best of it under current circumstances. (2 points)
    - hire the staff and outfit our station to properly archive it in-house, or explore a partnership with an outside archives. (3 points)

NOW, ADD UP YOUR SCORE TO FIND YOUR HERITAGE QUOTIENT:

20 - 34 POINTS: NOVICE
You may think you're in bad shape, but it's not too late! There are often ways to salvage the materials of the past, and the stuff you're producing now will be tomorrow's resource. There's guidance to be had, too, through the archival community and your colleagues in the field.

In a way, this Guide was made just for you! In it, you will find ideas for steps to take (Section 2), examples of how other stations have tackled the issues (Section 3), and resources from which you can find answers (Section 4). Try the BONUS SENTENCE below to test your outlook on your station's heritage.

35 - 47 POINTS: APPRENTICE
You've made terrific strides - Good for you! You are in an excellent position to turn your station's footage and programming into the valuable resource they can be. The rest of this Guide will help you refine your operation, with ideas for steps to take to tackle specific issues (Section 2), examples of what other stations have done (Section 4), and resources from which you can find answers (Section 4). To remind yourself why you have come so far and should strive to achieve more, try the BONUS SENTENCE below.

48 - 60 POINTS: EXPERT
Congratulations! You are among the all too few local TV stations in America that have made a solid and lasting commitment to the preservation of your own creative heritage! You are a model to your colleagues and a vital contributor to our future's historical and cultural inheritance.

You're likely to recognize yourself in the remainder of this Guide. In a way, this Guide was made just for you! In it, you will find ideas for steps to take (Section 2), examples of how other stations have tackled the issues (Section 3), and resources from which you can find answers (Section 4). Try the BONUS SENTENCE below.

BONUS SENTENCE: ON THIS SENTENCE, CHECK ALL THE RESPONSES THAT APPLY:

We realize that our vintage materials are . . .
- a part of our station's heritage.
- important to our local community.
- a source of unique content.
- a fiscal asset if maintained and managed correctly.
- worthy of preservation.

If you checked even ONE of these, then you're in the right frame of mind to see the value of preserving and managing the products of your local station's heritage: its footage and programming.
Next Steps

Toward Saving Our Local Television Heritage

K, so you’ve discovered your Heritage Quotient, and now know at a very basic level how your station deals with its vintage programming. So, what’s next? Novices, Apprentices and Experts alike will find this section helpful. Here, you can pursue the fundamental steps involved in saving your station’s heritage from beginning to end.

These next steps are arranged in phases, from the most basic to the far-reaching. Each phase includes action steps that, together, represent all the issues that any station should consider when planning for and tackling the preservation of its own heritage. Reading through each of the steps will familiarize you with all the issues involved, and will give you the specifics you need to proceed.

A note of caution and encouragement: You will never do all of this at once! Don’t even try. Furthermore, you may never get to it all. But keep in mind that even the smallest steps are tremendous accomplishments in saving your station’s heritage.
PHASE 1: DEFINE YOUR SITUATION

This phase is a lot like the exercise of discovering your Heritage Quotient. But while the HQ’s “20 Questions” were meant to elicit quick, impressionistic responses, this phase is all about gathering details. These details will help you better understand your current situation, and will figure prominently in how you might proceed.

Step 1.1: Define your physical situation

In this step, you gather information about the materials themselves – essentially, figure out what you have.

- How many tapes and/or film reels do you have?
- What types of programming is included (daily news footage, features, sports, series, commercials, PSAs, etc.)?
- What time span does the material cover?
- What formats are included?
- Are the materials in any discernable order?
- Are the materials masters or copies? If copies, where are the masters?
- What equipment do you have to play back the different formats? Is it in good working order? Who knows how to run it?
- What is the condition of the materials? Are any particularly at risk?
- How and where are they stored?
- What are the environmental conditions of that space?
- How are the materials described (labels, manual or automated catalog, index, logs, scripts, etc.)? Are any described better than others?
- What other documentation exists, both accompanying the vintage footage and programming and relating to the history of your station (still photos, promotional materials, clippings, scrapbooks, reports, records, etc.)?
- What materials from your station are (or might be) already in someone else’s hands?

Step 1.2: Define your administrative situation

This step helps you delineate how your station currently deals with its vintage materials.

- Why have you kept what you have?
- How are the materials used, and by whom?
- Is there any kind of formal or informal decision making process to determine what gets saved?
- What records (release forms, work for hire contracts, rights statements, etc.) do you have to document your copyright of the materials?
- Are there any materials included for which you do not have copyright? What are they?
- What procedures are in place to select, save and describe current production materials? This may be the most important question of all. If you are unable to go backwards at this point start something that goes forward.
- Is anyone in charge of the materials (for their selection, storage, use)? Who?
- Are the materials secure?
- What people, organizations or businesses outside of your station (if any) are involved with the collection?
- Is there a budget for maintenance of the materials?

Step 1.3: Define your goals

The steps above cover your current realities. Now you get to dream! In this step, you will chart your goals for your vintage materials.

- What materials do you think should be kept? Consider which are most central to your mission, and would likely be used the most.
- How do you want to see the materials used (both internally and by others)?
- Are some materials more likely to be useful in the future than others? If you divided the materials into three to five prioritized categories, what would that list look like?
- What kind of access do you need? In what format, and how quickly?
- What descriptive information do you need to be able to locate the materials?
- Where would you like to see the collection housed? On- or off-site?
- Who on the staff should be involved in the management of the materials? In what capacities?
- What people, organizations, or businesses outside of your station might be useful to have involved in the project?

Here’s where conferring with an archivist can really help! And check with potential users – both in your station and out – for guidance on what is worth saving.

Are you interested in dubbing everything to digital? Keep in mind that digital is useful for access but can create “format obsolescence” problems of its own. Keep the original for posterity – or in case you end up with an obsolete digital format.

Station employees, retirees, even volunteers and interns from local schools can help you with this step.

Compiling a station history can help here. Local newspapers, libraries, or archives might have useful information that you don’t.

Here’s where conferring with an archivist can really help! And check with potential users – both in your station and out – for guidance on what is worth saving.
PHASE 2: SHORT TERM ACTION

Tackle the Immediate Needs
You may be unable to embark on a full-blown effort to establish an archival program, either internally or in partnership with an outside archive. But there are still plenty of things you can do to help save your station’s heritage without spending a lot of time or incurring a lot of expense. This is the triage phase. You tackle the immediate needs of your materials. This is a big step in assuring the longevity and usefulness of your vintage materials. The resource list found in Section 3 has some great tools to get you started.

Step 2.1: Organize!
First and foremost, get the materials in some logical order if they aren’t already. This simple step can go a long way toward making them more accessible – and will help preserve them, too, because you won’t need to sort through a lot to find what you need. To do this, consider the following ideas:

• Arrange news film by date.
• Arrange programs by title and date and note the episode.
• Consider storing like-format media together.

Step 2.2: Improve Storage
Your vintage materials won’t be around at all, let alone to use, if you don’t see to their physical needs. To best meet these needs, do the following:

• Gather the materials together in one space, with low and constant temperature and humidity levels. Constancy is important.
• Store materials showing signs of mold or extreme deterioration in a separate space, if possible.
• Use sturdy storage furniture, preferably not made of wood.
• Keep materials away from water pipes and sources of heat, fumes, and dust.
• Keep materials off the floor.
• Remove (and replace, if possible) damaged containers, and ones that do not provide adequate support.
• Store motion picture film horizontally, and videocassettes vertically.
• Restrict informal access to the space to keep wandering materials to a minimum.

Step 2.3: Gather descriptive information
Description (sometimes called “cataloging” or “indexing”) provides access to the content of the materials. Without it, finding the footage you need is extremely difficult! Here are some ideas on how to proceed:

• Gather all the sources of descriptive information (labels, logs, shotlists, rundowns, assignment sheets, scripts, film leader, “slugs”, etc.) together in one place preferably where the actual footage is stored.
• To make these written records more useful, make a simple card index or enter the information in a database. You may already be using a system in your station that you can use or easily adapt.

Step 2.4: Gather equipment
Chances are some or all of your vintage materials are in “obsolete” film and videotape formats – formats not commonly used any more by the station. How will you access that content? The answer is to have (or have access to) obsolete equipment. Here are some pointers:

• If you are lucky enough to have some, make sure the equipment is in good working order.
• Keep instruction manuals whenever possible.
• Make sure someone on staff is trained on the use of each piece of equipment.

Take a deep breath and go on to Phase 3. If you are willing – and able – to take saving your station’s heritage to the next level, this phase will guide you through planning for an actual archival program.

PHASE 3: LONG TERM ACTION

Plan for an Archival Program
Any plan includes both goals and strategies. You’ve already defined your goals in Phase 1. Now you can see how they relate to the various issues involved in a full-blown archival program, and create strategies accordingly.

Step 3.1: Select the players
It’s important to involve the appropriate people from the beginning of the planning to insure ongoing success. Consider the following:

• Do we want to keep this strictly internal, or are there partnerships we might consider?
• What departments in the station are likely to be users of these materials?
• Who has the expertise to direct us on … and assignments will each of the players have?
• Who will be in charge of the project? What are that person’s responsibilities? Practically, will they have time to devote to the project?

Step 3.2: Define strategies
Here you can plug your resources and goals from Phase 1 into the five fundamental issues involved in such a project. Then, with the players in mind, you can formulate your strategies.

• Selection
  - What materials do we want to keep?
  - Do we want to keep some only for a certain amount of time, and others indefinitely?
  - How will selection be done, and who will do it?
  - What policies and procedures will we have in place to assure that the right materials are kept, and for the right amount of time?
  - How will we incorporate our current productions into the selection process?
  - What will we do with the materials we decide not to keep?

• Preservation
  - Where will we store the materials? Do we need to outfit the space with better storage racks, environmental controls, and security and safety features?
Step 3.3: Explore the financial side
For each of the strategies, there will no doubt be costs. Consider these questions:
- What might each of the strategies cost?
- How should we prioritize the goals accordingly?
- Can our budget bear these costs?
- Can we pursue sponsorships?
- Can we pursue grants?
- Can partnerships with archives or other organizations or businesses help spread the costs around?

Step 3.4: Create a timeline
An important step in any action plan is scheduling the actions. When doing so, consider the following:
- Are the actions in the right order?
- Does the timing of certain actions take advantage of upcoming events or promotional or funding possibilities?
- Does the timeline fit the agenda of project partners?
- Will funding support the actions at the time they are scheduled?
- Can staff realistically work on the project when they are expected to?

Step 3.5: Draft the plan
The last step is to put the plan in writing. It should include:
- One-page executive summary
- List of goals and strategies
- Personnel
- Budget
- Timeline

Step 3.6: Implement the plan
Once all the pieces of your plan are in place, it’s time to make it happen. If you are stuck, confused, worried, just want a sympathetic ear or a good resource, call an archivist! They love to share knowledge and have an interest in seeing that wonderful collections are kept! This package contains a list that coordinates archivists with the NATAS chapters around the country. These individuals will be glad to advise you in your preservation efforts. Good luck!
SECTION 3
RESOURCES
RESOURCES
Where to go for help

GENERAL

Publications:
Bradsher, James Gregory, ed. “Managing Archives and Archival Institutions.” This book has a good general chapter, Managing Audio-Visual Archives, and is available used from Amazon.com.

Davidson, Steven and Gregory Lukow, eds. The Administration of Television Newsfilm and Videotape Collections: A Curatorial Manual. This is available from the Florida Moving Image Archive, 305-375-4527, and through the SAA web site, www.archivists.org. This book is geared toward archives with television news collections, so covers television information that may be too basic for a station but the volume has good fundamental “care and feeding” archival information.

“The Film Preservation Guide.” This guide is published by the National Film Preservation Foundation. Single print copies are available from the NFPF for a nominal mailing fee ($10 or less to cover age postage) or as a free download from their web site, www.filmpreservation.org


Web sites:
Many of the web sites in this Resource list have wonderful links to additional resources. If you don’t find specifically what you’re looking for in the sections below try the following sites, which have great resources and extensive links. Also included are organizations that are relevant.

www.amianet.org - This is the web site of the Association of Moving Image Archivists. AMIA is a vital organization of archivists who are more than willing to share information and assist in any way.

www.archivists.org - This is the web site of the Society of American Archivists. SAA has good publications and an active moving image group.

www.bufvc.ac.uk/faf/faf.htm - Film Archive Forum. This British organization represents public sector film and television archives.

www.fiatihta.org - This is the international organization of television archives.

www.filmforever.org - This web site is geared toward home movie formats, but is useful in many ways for film information.

www.hollywoodvaults.com - This site has an excellent resource list and another of useful links.

www.ntvpf.tv - National Television Preservation Foundation. This site is new and will be expanding quickly over the next several months.

www.vidipax.com - This web site has a good list of links and resources, too.
HISTORY OF LOCAL TELEVISION
Publications:
Murray, Michael D., and Donald G. Godfrey, eds. Television In America: Local Station History From Across The Nation. Available from Amazon.com and bookstores.


SELECTION (A.K.A. WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KEEP?)
Publications:


Case studies appendices:
The Northeast Historic Film/Maine Television Stations case study has a sample selection policy. The Pennsylvania Cable Network/The Cable Center case study has a sample selection policy.

DESCRIPTION/CATALOGING (FROM THE BASIC TO THE SUBLIME. USE WHAT WORKS FOR YOU.)
Publications:


Case study appendices:
The Northeast Historic Film/Maine Television Stations case study shows examples from Maine Public Broadcasting.
The WGBH, KSTP and AETN case studies have sample cataloging fields.

Web sites: www.imappreserve.org/ has good sample catalog records.

PRESERVATION AND STORAGE (THOSE ARE GOOD, PRACTICAL RESOURCES.)
Web sites:
http://www.amianet.org/publication/resour ces/guidelines/guidelines.html - AMIA has its preservation guides listed on the web site.
www.experimentaltvcenter.org - The Experimental Television Center, has preservation information under its resource section.
www.rit.edu/ipi - The Image Permanence Institute allows you to download a free Preservation Calculator, which tells what the life expectancy of visual materials is under different environmental conditions. The web site also has information on A-D strips. These are simple, inexpensive tools for detecting vinegar syndrome in acetate-based film, and sound or videotape.

Commercial storage vendors:
FPC/Kodak PRO-TEK, www.fpcfilm.com
Iron Mountain Film and Sound Archive, http://www.national-underground.com
Northeast Historic Film, www.oldfilm.org
Underground Vaults & Storage, Inc., www.uvsinc.com

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FUNDING
Most governmental agencies and private foundations provide grants only to non-profit organizations. Some foundations might fund a preservation project if the collection can be made available to the public in some way. Partnering with a non-profit archive, library or university is one very beneficial way to find funding.

Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS),
www.imls.gov

National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)
Preservation Assessment Grants,
www.neh.gov/grants

National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) is the grant-making arm of the National Archives and Records Administration.
www.archives.gov/grants

National Television Preservation Foundation,
www.ntvpf.tv

Private foundations
State and local arts councils
Station and family foundations
The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences is organized into twenty chapters across the United States. This map shows the geographic areas with stars for the chapter office locations. Find your area then check page 25 to find the AMIA members who have volunteered to serve as information resources in each chapter.

For further NATAS contact information see http://www.emmyonline.org/emmy/chapters.html
CASE STUDIES:
EXAMPLES OF SAVED LOCAL TELEVISION COLLECTIONS

Throughout the United States, it isn’t hard to find excellent examples of preservation of our local television heritage. Some of them are detailed in this section. Whether preserved within a station or in collaboration with an archival partner, these real-life examples provide models of cooperation and preservation that will both instruct and inspire.

It is apparent from these case studies that both the broadcasting and archival organizations involved consider their collections valuable assets. The distinctly different agreements, policies and processes represented in these examples provide a wide range of illustrations that can help other stations and archives protect their historical materials and provide access to them.

The participants in these case studies were chosen for the efforts each has made toward establishing an ongoing, organization-wide framework for preservation and access. None of the situations is perfect, as those involved freely admit. Each has strengths in different areas of interest. Those areas include rights (e.g., donor agreements or who owns what and how it can be used); selection (e.g., what gets saved and why); intellectual control (e.g., how information is located and managed); revenue (e.g., how collections are supported financially), and asset protection (e.g., preservation activities). The executive summary that precedes each study indicates the issues that are most successfully addressed by that particular study.

These studies span an impressive spectrum of local television stations and archival organizations. Some stations and archives are public, and some are private; some are small, others are large. All three types of local television operations in the United States (commercial, public, and cable) are represented. Yet many of the practices and solutions are applicable to any venue. Any station or archival organization interested in saving the resources of local television can find something of value in the successful methods illustrated here.

THE CASE STUDIES ARE:
Case Study #1: KSTP-TV (Minneapolis, MN)/Minnesota Historical Society
Case Study #2: Maine Television Stations/Northeast Historic Film
Case Study #3: WGBH (Boston)
Case Study #4: Pennsylvania Cable Network/The Cable Center (Denver, CO)
Case Study #5: Arkansas Educational Television Network (AETN)