

AMIA the association of moving image archivists

1996 Silver Light Award Winner: Paul Spehr

Tribute by Barbara Humphrys

Paul Spehr, one of America's leading film archivists for over three decades, is the 1996 recipient of the Association of Moving Image Archivists' Silver Light career recognition award. The award will be presented to Spehr at AMIA's awards luncheon in Atlanta on December 5, 1996, during the association's annual conference.

Spehr provided a steady hand and the institutional memory through out a 35-year career in the Library of Congress and continues his service to the field of film and television preservation through consulting and scholarship.

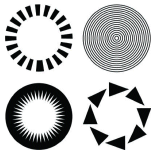
AMIA President Maxine Fleckner Ducey said she has know Spehr for 20 years. "It is a real pleasure to be able to honor an individual who has had such a long and distinguished career, and who has never wavered in his commitment to moving image preservation, access and scholarship. Ducey said Spehr "has always remained approachable, honest and genuinely dedicated to this field and those who work in it. His enthusiastic participation in F/TAAC and now AMIA benefits us all."

Spehr started his career in 1958 as a clerk-typist in the Library of Congress' tiny Motion Picture Section. His transition to assistant chief of the newly formed Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division in 1979 (Acting chief 1978-79 and 1981-83) reflects the evolution of the division's growth and complexity.

During the years 1958 to 1993 the motion picture staff grew from seven, caring for a collection of several thousand titles, to more than 70 employees, with responsibility for 250,000 films, 80,000 television programs, 150,000 radio broadcasts, and several million sound recordings. Spehr played an important role in many M/B/RS milestones over the years, as well as development of the Library's Motion Picture Conservation Center in Dayton, Ohio.

He has also made important contributions to the world of moving image preservation outside the Library of Congress, serving as its most constant representative to the International Federation of Film Archives (serving on its executive committee, 1983-87), the International Federation of Television Archives, the Film/Television Archives Advisory Committee (FAAC/TAAC, AMIA's predecessor), many symposia, and more planning meetings than he'd like to count.

Spehr's retirement from the Library of Congress in 1993 has permitted him to indulge his interest in early cinema. His American Film Personnel and Company Credits, 1908-1920 has recently been published, and he is currently researching the life and work of W. K. L. Dickson.



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