

AMIA the association of moving image archivists

1997 Silver Light Award Winner: Dan Den Bleyker

Tribute by Gregory Lukow

Dan Den Bleyker, one of America's leader's in the development of regional moving image archives, is the 1997 recipient of the Association of Moving Image Archivists Silver Light recognition award. The award -- which recognizes special achievements and career contributions to the field of moving image archiving -- will be presented to Dan Bleyker at AMIA's annual awards luncheon on November 20, 1997, during the association's Washington, DC, conference.

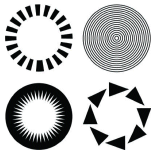
Den Bleyker retired earlier this year as the Audio-Visual Records Curator of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History in Jackson, Mississippi. AMIA President Andrea Kalas said of Dan Bleyker: "Dan's accomplishments as a leader in the community of state and regional archives, particularly in the area of television news collections, are well known to AMIA members. His ground-breaking work in indexing, preserving and making accessible the newsfilm holdings of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History was an example and inspiration to many who found themselves a part of this growing constituency in the 1980s. AMIA is pleased to honor Dan for all he has done throughout his career to safeguard our moving image heritage and make it available to historians and researchers around the world."

Den Bleyker joined the Mississippi Department in 1985, after having previously worked for two years as a public librarian in Sunnyside, Washington, and before that for eight years as an oil industry technician. At the Mississippi archives, his responsibilities focused on collection development, preservation, access, and publicity for the Department's motion picture film collections. These contain material dating from the 1930s through 1981, and include three major local Mississippi 16mm newsfilm collections, two smaller newsfilm collections, and other material relating to the state of Mississippi.

One of Dan Bleyker's most notable accomplishments was promoting the value and use of local newsfilm to researchers, historians, and television producers around the world. This he accomplished in part by creating detailed finding aids for the unique, subject-oriented documentation -- much of it unedited -- and by making viewing copies easily accessible for much of the millions of feet of film in the archive. In large part because of Dan's efforts, footage in the collection has been used in a number of Emmy and Peabody award-winning documentaries and television histories.

Said Den Bleyker on learning of his receipt of the Silver Light award, "It has been a great pleasure to contribute in some way to the enhancement of the profession. Over the years, I learned that networking is absolutely essential. It has been extremely enjoyable to talk to so many people, here in the United States and overseas. The exchange of ideas, information, and suppositions has truly been a wonderful experience."

Den Bleyker began participating in the Film/Television Archives Advisory Committee in 1985 and was a charter member of AMIA. He is a member of the Mississippi Historical Society Oral History Committee, and served as Membership Chair of the Society of Mississippi Archivists from 1986-89. He was a judge for the Wolfson Media History Center Film and Video Awards for six years from 1992 through 1997. He is the author of the "Research and Reference Services" chapter of the recently published book, *The Administration of Television and Newsfilm and Videotape Collections: A Curatorial Manual*, and was a member of the Project Advisory Committee for the publication.



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Den Bleyker has been an outspoken advocate for the use of local television material not only within AMIA, but also in such diverse venues as the Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival, and the annual meetings of the Society of American Archivists, the American Association of State and Local History, the Southern Archivists Conference, and the Association of College and Research Libraries. In 1988 he organized a discussion on local news collecting at a joint meeting of the Society of Mississippi Archivists and the Society of Alabama Archivists. He was also a speaker at the first ever national gathering of local television archivists held in Madison, Wisconsin, in 1987.