



AMIA the association of moving image archivists

1999 Silver Light Award Winner: William T. Murphy

Tribute by Alan Lewis

The AMIA Board of Directors has selected William T. Murphy as this year's recipient of the Silver Light Award. The award is AMIA's highest recognition for achievement in the field of moving image archives. A presentation will be made at the Awards Luncheon at the Association's Conference in Montreal.

Bill, as he is known to friends and colleagues, was one of the original activists who saw the need to establish a professional association for archivists, librarians, and others who appreciated the importance of moving image archives as a record of our history and culture and who wished to have access to a source of information about the maintenance and care of moving image archives from other persons willing to share their experiences and expertise. Bill's foresight and activism, joined by others, eventually led to the creation of the Association of Moving Image Archivists, and Bill was elected as the founding President, helping to move the nascent organization in the right direction.

Although he worked for a short time as an editor for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, most of Bill's career has been in the National Archives and Records Administration and his work has been closely tied to its audiovisual holdings. He served as an archivist, Chief of the former Motion Picture, Sound, and Video Branch, and Senior Specialist in Audiovisual Archives. Bill has let it be known that he will retire from NARA at the end of the year but intends to remain active in the field.

Over the years Bill has been a prominent advocate for the need to preserve nonfiction film and videotape, and, through his speeches, presentations, and publications, he has effectively carried this message to many audiences such as archivists, scholars, funders, documentary filmmakers, and broadcasters and has encouraged historians to use moving images in their research. Bill has addressed such organizations as the International Federation of Film Archives, International Federation of Television Archives, International Association for Media and History, Society of American Archivists, the UN World Television Forum, and many more. His public speaking venues have taken him to many parts of the world, from the United States, Canada, and Mexico, to many parts of Europe, and to Japan. In 1991 the International Documentary Association presented him with its Preservation and Scholarship Award.

Bill's major publication is *Television and Video Preservation 1997: A Study of the Current State of American Television and Video Preservation*, five volumes, sponsored by the Library of Congress. Bill coordinated three public hearings and wrote the study under an inter-agency agreement between the Library of Congress and NARA. To carry out the study, Bill traveled around the country, stimulated interest in the problems of television and video preservation, and secured the participation of archivists, scholars, and production and broadcast executives. Since its publication the study has been cited in many preservation grant applications to underscore their needs, and the study's recommendations have led to a series of measures that will have an enduring impact in our field. Bill is also the author of *Robert Flaherty: A Guide to Reference and Resources* (G.K.Hall, 1978) and *Managing Audiovisual Records* (1996), a NARA publication used throughout the Federal Government.