

# COLLECTION OVERVIEW

## TELEVISION AND VIDEO

### I. SCOPE

This overview of the Library's collections deals with television and video, while motion pictures are covered separately. There is some overlap because many early television broadcasts were recorded on motion picture film.

### II. SIZE

With passage of the Copyright Reform Act of 1976, Congress broadened the Library's collecting mandate by founding the American Television and Radio Archives (ATRA), directing the Library to acquire and preserve for posterity television and radio broadcasts. No other archive has a governmental directive to collect, and to collect as broadly, as the Library. The collections of the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division include approximately 350,000 television and video programs. Television programs have been acquired by the Library of Congress since 1949, primarily via copyright deposit. Approximately 14,000 of these programs are listed in a now out-of-print guide, *Three Decades of Television*; a catalog of television programs acquired by the Library of Congress from 1949-1979, prepared by Sarah Rouse and Katherine Loughney.

### III. GENERAL RESEARCH STRENGTHS

The size and scope of the Library's television and video holdings are unparalleled in the United States. The vast majority of these holdings have been received as copyright deposits; MBRS continues to receive approximately 30,000 video items every year. Due to the copyright law, MBRS is particularly strong in American network and cable news and entertainment television.

The Library has also actively pursued television collections. Retrospective collections include those from NBC (over 20,000 kinescope reels dating from 1947), NET/PBS (an ongoing collection now numbering more than 60,000 items), and game shows from Goodson-Todman Productions. MBRS has also received televised material by gift, including three major series: *Meet the Press*, *Omnibus* and the *Original Amateur Hour*.

### IV. AREAS OF DISTINCTION

- **NBC Television Collection:** The NBC Television Collection was acquired by the Library in July 1986. It is an historic collection of over 20,000 kinescope

reels of television programs broadcast by NBC from the late 1940s to the early 1970s.

- **NET/PBS Collection:** National Educational Television programs held by the Library total over 10,000 titles and date from 1955-69. NET metamorphosed into PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) in 1969, and MBRS continues to get regular donations from PBS, a collection now numbering more than 60,000 items and growing.
- **The Vanderbilt Television News Archive Collection.** Since 1968, Vanderbilt University has been taping both regular and special news programs, and then publishing indices to the news, which are also in the reference reading room. This outstanding news collection has been digitized, and those files are available for viewing the reading room.
- **Ed Sullivan Collection.** *The Ed Sullivan Show* (CBS, 1948-1971) was a landmark television program, and unquestionably one of the most important chronicles of mid-20th century popular culture. MBRS acquired master material—original 16mm kinescopes and 2-inch video tape—of all 1030 hours of the show from current owner Sofa Entertainment, and simultaneously arranged to purchase new BetaSP preservation video copies. Coupled with a comprehensive performer database, MBRS provides patrons with complete access to this exceptional program, available in no other archive.
- **Bob Hope Collection.** In 2000, Bob Hope donated his collection of film, television, and radio to the Library, along with the digitized contents of his legendary “joke file.” Included in the collection are approximately 15,000 film cans and videotapes from Bob Hope television specials, from the 1950s through his last appearance in 1996; of special note are outtakes and raw footage from his trips to China and the Soviet Union, and his USO appearances in Vietnam and Kuwait. The Library has acquired all production elements from every television special starring the beloved comedian: 284 shows, or over 450 hours of programming.

## V. ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

- **Vanderbilt Television News Archive.** Evening news broadcasts and special news programs from the major networks starting in August 1968, available online in a streaming format.
- **Coca-Cola Television Advertising.** Over 20,000 television commercials from Coca-Cola, dating to 1950.

## VI. WEAKNESSES/EXCLUSIONS

Although the Library’s television and video collections are extraordinarily strong, the collection developed unevenly over time, primarily because copyright law in the first several decades of television was unsettled when it came to the new medium, and a lack of appreciation by Library acquisitions officers for the value of television as an object of

research. As a result, the television holdings are spotty until the 1970s (for example, for *Gunsmoke* [1955-75], the Library retained only one copyrighted episode in 1963, six in 1969, and twenty-one in 1973).

MBRS collections of foreign television are relatively small, but continue to grow through such relationships with organizations like SCOLA, which receives and re-transmits television programming from 120 countries around the world in 80 native languages. As of March 2008, Library has received over 1.25TB of digital files from SCOLA.