

The Museum of Broadcasting
by
Mary V. Ahern, Curator

With all the great anniversaries upon us - the 100th year of recorded sound, 50th celebration of Network Radio Broadcasting, 50th year of talking pictures, I hope that our 1 year old Museum of Broadcasting will have something to whistle about when it passes its 5th anniversary. Let me tell you what that hope is based on.

Our present mandate and funding are based on a five year projection: to collect and preserve, process and catalog 9,000 hours of broadcast history in the U.S. from the 1920's through to the 1970's. Since 1 million hours may be estimated to have been broadcast over networks in this half century of radio and television, the collection is going to be, of necessity, selective but - and this is the more challenging aspect - should also be representative. Because of its longer history, radio programs will make up approximately 2/3rds of the collection - 5,500 hours in addition to the goal of 3,500 hours of television. There is also the economic factor: transferring television programs onto video-cassettes is a far costlier process than the transfer of radio - preponderantly on discs up to 1950 - to audiotape. The museum preserves its radio collection on high quality 1/4 inch open reels at 3 3/4 i.p.s. half-track mono. We use the two hours available on Maxell 50-60. Copies for public use on the premises in the study center are on 60 minute Maxell cassettes - more about the Broadcast Study Center later.

I would like to go into the selection process now. Standards of accessioning were set before the opening of the Museum. The principal people involved in setting the standards have accumulated 120 years in broadcasting: William S. Paley, founder and funder of the museum, 50 years; Robert Saudek, 40 years; and myself, 30 years. Once Mr. Paley had persuaded all the Networks - ABC, CBS, NBC, & PBS - to join in this undertaking, the museum had storehouses of treasures to tap and so the following categories were delineated and maximum hours in each category were projected.

What we hope we will achieve with this chartered course, which is outlined below, is to have a representative collection of the diversity in programming that characterizes Network radio and television schedules. You will notice that News is not a featured category. It is an area that is so voluminous that we do not plan to have News per se except where it naturally comes in on full days of programming: The Fall of Poland and France, December 7, 1941. D-Day, V-E Day, V-J Day, the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy, July 4, 1976, January 20, 1977 etc. These whole days present a coherent whole. Everything is in context and programs relate to each other.

THE MUSEUM OF BROADCASTING
 RADIO & TELEVISION COLLECTION

Projection
 9,000 hours by end of 1981

RADIO		TELEVISION
(Maximum hours in each classification)		(Maximum hours in each classification)
	S T A N D A R D S	
	TOP RATED	
1000	Nighttime	800
250	Daytime	100
	MILESTONE SPECIALS	
1000	Premieres, Debuts Anniversaries	500
	AWARDS & NOMINATIONS	
500	Peabody, Emmys, Clio's	400
750	PERFORMING ARTS	500
750	INFORMATIONAL & BIOGRAPHICAL (Pub. Affairs & Documentaries)	500
500	CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS	300
500	SPORTS	300
250	FULL DAYS (Historic & Random)	100
5,500		3,500 hours
	9,000 HOURS	
	Radio & T.V.	

But what of the whole mosaic? What of series that run for years and years, like Jack Benny? Here we choose the premiere program of May 22, 1932, the first of the Fred Allen feud programs on January 10, 1937, the famous "Money or Your Life" ("I'm thinking," said Jack) in 1948 and on into a selection of his television programs which show his satires of plays and movies like Gaslight with Barbara Stanwyck making her TV debut, Rochester, the Maxwell, and the famous Guarded Vault Moats and all - we have 20 hours of Benny now and we will add more as the years go by. If a researcher wanted to study the total Jack Benny broadcast history, we have the catalogue of the complete Benny collection at NATAS-UCLA and would refer the person to that collection.

We hope we will receive any and all catalogues of radio and TV collections throughout the United States so that we can give as many leads as possible to the student of broadcasting. Our own catalogue will be published early next year so that we can share information. Michael Gray, of the Voice of America, gave me a list he compiled of every Toscanini radio and TV broadcast. We have all the ten television broadcasts and we will start to build the radio concerts. This kind of a list is invaluable to me and it's available to any Toscanini student here at the Museum.

Another useful way our projected standards work is that we can go back to any given year of broadcasting in many different ways. If we missed Beverly Sills' debut on Major Bowes' Amateur Hour in selecting top rated programs in 1939, then, when Jim Smart, the Recorded Sound Reference Librarian of the Library of Congress, tells me that he has identified her debut as "Bubbles" Silverman on October 26, 1939, we can go back and pick it up. One of our many visitors (13,000 as of October 1st) filled out a program suggestion card informing us that the last reunion of the four Marx Brothers was in the General Electric theatre program of March 8, 1959. Having this kind of precise information helps so much, especially in a long running series.

Another way we are collecting is by clustering. We have, naturally, the famous Mercury Theatre's War of the Worlds that aired Sunday, October 30, 1938 from 8-9pm. In addition we collected the radio interview with Orson Welles and H. G. Wells of two years later on October 28, 1940. Then we saw that TV's Studio One had done an hour program called "The Night America Trembled" on September 9, 1957 with Edward R. Murrow as narrator. That TV broadcast reenacted the studio production of War of the Worlds, and related what audience reactions were on that historic evening almost 20 years before. Another way "clustering" can work is to augment the well-known tour of the White House with Mrs. John F. Kennedy in 1961 by acquiring the three network coverage of President Truman's tour of the newly shored up White House on May 3, 1952 and then adding the Sixty Minutes feature of Tricia Nixon's tour on May 26, 1970.

We want to have as many of the programs that went from radio to TV as we can: Gunsmoke, Amos 'n Andy, March of Time, The Goldbergs to

illustrate the medium when sight was added to sound. Where we can, we want to get the genesis of programs like the March of Time with its re-creation of news events with actors. We have some of its predecessors in Newsacting reenactments of news events: "Georges Clemenceau" in 1929 and the interview with "William Randolph Hearst" in 1930. Re-creations of contemporary and historic events permeate broadcast history and we will try to have representation through the You Are There series on up to They've Killed President Lincoln to Washington, Behind Closed Doors.

We want to have a good Presidential collection from Harding, Coolidge and Hoover in the 1920's, FDR in the 30's and 40's on through to President Carter's radio television programs.

Most all the programs we are receiving from the networks have the commercials intact so there will be a generous sampling of the selling side of broadcasting in the collection.

For the visitor to the museum, the heart of the matter is choosing a program and then having it played back on a console in the Broadcast Study Center. This center consists of eight consoles which can accommodate 3 people and play back both radio and television programs. The attendant places the program in the machine and the user may run the controls to forward, fast forward to a particular section or run it back to rehear something. Members - the number is up to 400 now - may telephone in advance and reserve a program and a console over the phone. Choosing a program is aided by as many access points as a program requires. I thought you might like to see one card for a March of Time in 1934. It has ten added entries.

March of Time, The (Radio)
CBS Oct 5, 1934 Friday

R77:0041
30 min.

CREDITS:

SUMMARY: One in a series of dramatic reenactments of news events of the week. First a farewell to Gen. Hugh S. Johnson of the NRA. Onto Balmoral Castle, Scotland, where Queen Mary is teaching Princess Marina the Highland fling (103). Berlin: Hitler's public agent offers a scholarship to Harvard (155). France: Corruption in the police department scandalizes the country (191). U.S. : An ideological clash between Hoover & Henry A. Wallace over the NRA codes (262). Ireland: A strange curse on the House of Waterford dooms its heirs. Mass: A Middlesex student wins on the race-track against incredible odds (341). N.J.: Bruno Hauptmann is on trial for the kidnapping of the Lindbergh son (398). Includes commercials for Time magazine.
1. Radio - News 2. CBS - Radio series, 1931-1945
3. Johnson, Hugh S. 4. Mary, Queen of Great Britain

5. Police corruption 6. U.S. National Recovery Administration 7. Hoover, Herbert - 1934 8. Hauptmann, Bruno 9. Lindbergh, Charles 10. Drama, historical re-creation.

It is anticipated that we will have as many as 500,000 cards for the collection at the end of 1981.

I hope many of you will have a chance to visit the museum when you are in New York. I would welcome the opportunity to talk with you and to explore ways we can extend our services. All our program material has to be seen and heard on the premises but the information about it should be available to everyone.

In closing - two thoughts: how marvelous it is that sound was recorded on discs - think of all the "live" radio shows that would have been lost forever. A second thought is inspired by Don Tait's article on Felix Weingartner in the ARSC Journal of 1976 (vol. VIII, no. 2-3). He wrote that Weingartner's records still provide "highly significant musical pleasures rather than just glimpses into the past." That is certainly what we aspire for the collection here, that it will supply to the user now, and in the future, a significant re-experiencing of the past.