

Other Things to Consider When Working With Oral Histories

(And Other Audio Materials)

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A few more things on
digitization...



Organizing

- ▶ Organize your collections before you digitize!
- ▶ Survey your audio materials to know what you have.
 - ▶ Know all of the audio materials you have BEFORE you start digitizing to avoid having to repeat efforts.
 - ▶ Can be a simple list of your audio materials, denoting format, content, and location.



Documentation of your audio collections
can also be helpful in seeking grants for
digitization and preservation.



Transcription:

Creation of a verbatim textual
representation of a recorded interview



<http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/gettingstarted/glossary/video/glossary/transcribe/>

Transcription is important for access, as well as preservation. Some researchers are more comfortable with paper, and working with a transcription will allow them to access most of the content of an oral history.

Transcription

- ▶ Ideally, a transcription involves the following:
 - ▶ “A word-for-word rendering in print of the words (and non-verbal utterances) spoken in the interview with minimal editorial intervention.”
 - ▶ “Review of the resulting document by the interviewer for accuracy and correction as necessary.”
 - ▶ “Review by the narrator for accuracy and correction, emendation, amplification, and occasionally, redaction or restriction of certain materials.”
 - ▶ “Revision per narrator changes.”
 - ▶ “Editing and annotation for sense, context, etc.”

▶ Quoted text from: Shopes, Linda. “Transcribing Oral History in the Digital Age,” in *Oral History in the Digital Age*, edited by Doug Boyd, Steve Cohen, Brad Rakerd, and Dean Rehberger. Washington, D.C.: Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2012. <http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/2012/06/transcribing-oral-history-in-the-digital-age/>

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But this isn't always possible. If you've inherited your oral histories, the best you can do for transcription is the first and last listed here.

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If your interviewer is still around, you can also pursue the second step.

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If you have both your narrator and interviewee accessible, you can attempt to pursue all the steps.

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But if you only have the means to simply create a written, word-for word transcription of the interview, that’s still a great step towards greater access.

Managing Your Digital Files

“...let us save what remains not by vaults and locks which fence them from the public eye and use in consigning them to the waste of time, but by such a multiplication of copies, as shall place them beyond the reach of accident.”

-Thomas Jefferson, Feb. 18, 1791



Maintaining Your Digital Files

**L
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Maintaining Your Digital Files

**Lots
Of
Copies
Keeps
Stuff
Safe**

**Multiple Copies
Multiple Locations**

3-2-1 Principle

- ▶ *3 copies*
- ▶ *2 different media*
- ▶ *1 copy offsite*



LOCKSS is a project designed to preserve copies of electronic publications at libraries by ensuring that multiple copies are stored at different organizations administered by Stanford University.

Even though LOCKSS is a library based project, it's a great mantra for thinking about maintaining all of your files, not just the digital. In this case, we're talking about making sure that there is more than one copy of your digital file in existent, in multiple locations.



Legal and Ethical Issues

Legal and Ethical issues, including copyright, are things you need to think about when digitizing any audio material.

One of the most important things to think about when dealing with digitizing oral histories is the consent of the interviewee. Do you have consent of the interviewee to archive and preserve their interview and to make it available to researchers? For older oral histories you might hold, it might be difficult to track down a consent form, if there even was one. If you do have a consent, you need to consider how the interviewee perceived the access of the interview – Previously, an oral history could only be accessed on site, using the physical media, limiting access to researchers in the library. With digitization and the internet, the whole world can access the internet.

In addition, you need to be aware of the content of the interviews you might digitize. Do they contain personal, confidential, or sensitive information that should be restricted? Are there criminal allegations or slanderous statements included?

Belfast Project at Boston College – <http://chronicle.com/interactives/belfast>

Oral History in the Digital Age

Ethics

<http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/category/ethics/>

Legal Issues

<http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/category/legal-issues/>



Don't forget about the originals!

- ▶ Don't throw out the original just because you have a digital copy!
- ▶ Ensure that the original media is stored properly.
 - ▶ VHS, cassette tapes, CDs, and DVDs should be stored vertically, similar to a book. Storing materials horizontally can place unwanted pressure on the tape or disc.
 - ▶ Ensure that tapes are wound smoothly and evenly. If using playback equipment, use only play and reverse – fast forward and rewind can cause tension to develop.
 - ▶ Do not store tapes near machinery, windowsills, or strong magnetic fields.



Pop Those Tabs!



- ▶ Popping the write protection tab will protect you from accidentally recording over when using playback equipment.



Helpful Resources

Professional Organizations

- ▶ Oral History Association

- ▶ <http://www.oralhistory.org/>

- ▶ The website for the national oral history association, offers links to resources and information on oral history workshops.

- ▶ Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region

- ▶ <https://ohmar.org/>

- ▶ Offer workshops, conferences, and meet-ups in the Mid-Atlantic region. The website also includes links to resources and information on oral history best practices.



General Resources

- ▶ “The Smithsonian Folklife and Oral History Interviewing Guide”

By Marjorie Hunt

- ▶ http://www.folklife.si.edu/education_exhibits/resources/guide/introduction.aspx

- ▶ How to manual for conducting oral histories

- ▶ *Curating Oral Histories: From Interview to Archive*

By Nancy MacKay

- ▶ Excellent overview of managing oral histories after the interview



▶ *Sound Recording: The Life Story of a Technology*

By David Morton

- ▶ Useful for identifying formats and locating proper playback equipment.

- ▶ Oral History in the Digital Age
 - ▶ <http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/>
 - ▶ An excellent, all-in-one resource on oral histories. Includes information on conducting oral history projects, selecting recording equipment, preservation, legal issues, and more.



Legal Issues

- ▶ “Major Legal Challenges Facing Oral History In The Digital Age”

By John A. Neuenschwander

- ▶ <http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/2012/06/major-legal-challenges/>
- ▶ Provides a general overview of legal issues relating to oral histories.

- ▶ *A Guide to Oral History and the Law*

By John A. Neuenschwander

- ▶ A detailed work on American law as it applies to oral history.

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- ▶ Copyright and Related Issues Relevant to Digital Preservation and Dissemination of Unpublished Pre-1972 Sound Recordings by Libraries and Archives
CLIR Report by June M. Besek

- ▶ <http://www.clir.org/pubs/abstract/reports/pub144>

- ▶ Includes guidance for dealing with unpublished pre-1972 recordings.

- ▶ Copyright Term and the Public Domain in the United States, 1 January 2015

- ▶ <http://copyright.cornell.edu/resources/publicdomain.cfm>

- ▶ Updated yearly



Resources and Guides

- ▶ National Recording Preservation Board Audio Preservation Resources
 - ▶ <https://www.loc.gov/programs/national-recording-preservation-board/resources/audio-preservation-bibliography/#copyright>
 - ▶ Published articles on a variety of facets of sound preservation, cataloging, and standardization, among other topics, categorized by discipline and area of study.
- ▶ ARSC Guide to Audio Preservation
 - ▶ <http://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub164>
 - ▶ "...aimed at individuals and institutions that have recorded sound collections but lack the expertise in one or more areas to preserve them."

▶

Collections Storage

- ▶ IPI Media Storage Quick Reference
 - ▶ https://www.imagepermanenceinstitute.org/webfm_send/301
 - ▶ Excellent resource for understanding the storage needs of tapes, CDs, and DVDs, as well as negatives and prints.
- ▶ Care, Handling, and Storage of Audio Visual Materials
 - ▶ <http://www.loc.gov/preservation/care/record.html>
- ▶ Frequently Asked Questions: Audio/Visual Materials
 - ▶ <http://www.loc.gov/preservation/about/faqs/audio.html>



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