



SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE NETWORK

2015 ATALM POST-CONFERENCE WORKSHOP

NOTES

SESSION: Digital Preservation

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DATE: Sunday, 9/13, 3:00pm-5:00pm

The AFC has cultural documentation of over 100 tribes in the US.

- Example: Jesse Walter Fewkes - 1890s wax cylinders - first ethnographic field recordings of Native American voices.
- Recovering Voices <http://recoveringvoices.si.edu/>
- Return to tribal communities in wax cylinder project
- Omaha project - listened to Omaha elders on how they wanted them shared
- Cultural knowledge returned
- Revitalized cultural information

It is important for non-native institutions to return materials to the affiliated nations.
What is considered sensitive changes over time, with use and loss

LoC cannot “be above” getting involved - are ALREADY involved in a big way.
We should make materials available, but be cautious in exactly how we do so.

Big institutions work on a different scale from most TALMs

- Important to use and access LOC (and other) collections otherwise they are of no value
- LOC preserves collections for ethical and official policy reasons
- The history of LoC is that of colonial enterprise

Members of tribal communities can do the most important work in cultural revival, and building knowledge for future generations

Pokagon Purpose Statement

Where are the collection managers?

- They are in that department, and wrote the purpose statement. They are best positioned to inform those kind of decisions

Collections Management Plan

- Digital Preservation \neq Access
- Only part of a larger collections management plan

Storage

- External hard drives
- Computers - internal hard drive
- Optical disks and CDs

NONE OF THESE ARE AN ARCHIVE

What is a digital archive?

- It has to be a policy based system that states
 - HOW you will archive digital objects
 - Ways you will preserve culture heritage
- Define and control ingestion, storage, management, and retrieval of materials

Sustainability is key

Digital Preservation

- Analog formats died off very very fast
- There is NO permanent digital format
- Agents and manufacturers sell product, their claims of archival permanency are probably not to be trusted
- Optical disks are really terrible, volatile, unreliable
- Moving to all file-based formats, not long-term storage on optical media
- Digital formats require migration at least every format generation
- Moving CD to CD inflicts data rot, can lose data spontaneously
- Constant vigilance is required for long term preservation and storage

Digitization

- Digitizing for preservation AND access
 - Remember: Digitization does not equal Access
- Use an archival standard format and systems for ongoing migration and emulation
- Access to cultural memory is very important and timely, maybe more important than long term preservation

Step One (oral history example)

- What is your IT infrastructure?
- Where will you put everything?
- If this information is so important, obviously you want it sustained long term

- Rugged/Robust infrastructure is key
- Redundancy is very crucial
 - LOCKSS - Lots Of Copies Keep Stuff Safe
- How do you ensure that you can access those redundant copies?
- Maintain good administrative records and metadata

Digital repositories for audio are collections of digital objects, not just sound files

- This means metadata

Example: reel tapes

- Take photo of tape boxes/labels
- But that label might be wrong (trust but verify)
- Only way to know for sure is to listen to it
- Which brings us back to digitization because old formats are hard to access, especially because analog equipment is at risk of loss through use
- Package the audio file with label photos and whatever other supplemental documents there are - this is essential

Sustainability

- Issues from in-house digitization/playback?
 - Outsourced when problems arose
- Personnel is key to digitization
- You outsource because you need it done within a specific timeline
 - Eg: grant funding timeline
- Computers - standalone, dedicated digitization units!!!! Keep them offline, off-network to avoid issues with automatic updates, clock resets, etc...
 - This requires full understanding of the IT department...
 - IT staff are not archivists, this can cause professional conflicts
 - You have different requirements, but need their skills
 - The crux is an understanding of what your materials are
 - Include IT in your advisory board meetings
- As cultural brokers, you are mediating a range of people, users, guests, your staff, and more
- If you can't do it yourself, find a trusted vendor to convert your materials into an appropriate format
 - ARSC has a directory of vendors
 - AMIA also
 - Join listserves, such as those from ARSC, AMIA
 - Develop professional relationships and connections with trained, trusted professionals
 - Standards are driven by industry, especially formats... they go away and change because industry wants to make money

Horror stories

Audio field recording

- Example of near data loss from field school
- mp3/access copies were saved, master files were not
- IT department did not understand or accept idea that they needed large master files
- System crashed one day
- All departments lost everything
- IT found some, sent them back, but it was mismanaged and unreadable formats

Outsourcing

- Ask for master/preservation and access copies (best practice)
- To save money, though, just getting a preservation copy and creating your own access copies might help (or actually might be more time and money, depending)
- Find a trusted vendor, try checking with
 - Association of Recorded Sound Archivists
 - Association of Moving Image Archives

FADGI

- Information on current sustainable formats, best practices

Other Costs

- Money
- Time
- Storage costs
 - Where will you put your files, and how much space will you need?
 - Your collections will only keep growing and growing and growing, your storage costs will keep going up and up
 - Doug Boyd - where do you put it, how much are you going to get back?
 - Digital Audio Calculator - tool for estimating costs at various resolutions
https://libraries.uky.edu/libpage.php?lweb_id=856&llib_id=13
- Video space calculator <http://www.digitalrebellion.com/webapps/videocalc>

Closing Notes

- Digital Preservation is reliant on you knowing what is in your archives
- That means a survey of ALL your materials
- This is important at all levels of collections management, not just digital preservation
- Understand what kind of project you are trying to do
- Make hard but essential decisions on what costs you can afford
- Helps you gain intellectual control of your collections, understand the relationship between very different types of objects
- Identifies the scale of the task/problem ahead of you
- There are no shortcuts, but there are tools to help you

Go to the SHN for tutorials, resources, and more

Google mapping workshop

- There was no discussion of digital preservation
- Save your layers yourself if you want a copy of it, no storage offered
- Privacy of each person - you do own your data, and you have to maintain it

Guha/Questions

- Different types of backups?
 - LTO tapes are good for long-term storage, not intermittent access
 - (also very high scale and cost, probably not of use to most TALMs)
 - Spinning disk for intermittent access
 - More information for small TALMs is coming from us at WSU
- Folklife center busy digitizing 50 years of field work
 - Its' in mixed format - some of everything
 - Survey of two collections, estimated to produce 1 TB for just one collection
- Cloud storage?
 - We don't know, but most providers obviously operate as a business, may not have cultural commitments that match your needs
 - Also access restrictions etc...
 - Also the worries about terms of service, and other restrictions, especially in commercial "solutions", but there are some good options