Moving Forward: Enhancing Preservation of and Access to Oral Histories at UNLV University Libraries

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Recommended Citation

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Introduction

University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) Libraries Special Collections is dedicated to supporting researchers in the interdisciplinary study of Southern Nevada, Las Vegas, and gaming. The Digital Collections department, the Center for Gaming Research, and the Oral History Research Center (OHRC) are all housed under the umbrella of Special Collections. The OHRC, formally established as part of Special Collections in 2003, actively conducts oral history interviews with a variety of Las Vegas residents, promotes the importance of oral histories as a method of contributing to the historical record, and teaches classes on the art of collecting oral histories. The center also acts as the repository for oral history projects initiated throughout the UNLV campus and Las Vegas community, including a number of legacy interviews deposited at UNLV Libraries before OHRC's establishment.

In 2014, the Technical Services department was formed in Special Collections for the purpose of enhancing intellectual, physical, and online management and access of archival collections housed in the department. Technical Services provides support for the lifecycle of these materials including accessioning, processing, description, and preservation actions. The oral history collection is included in these activities. When we discuss oral histories in our holdings we refer primarily to audio recordings, transcripts, and supplementary files such as photographs, use agreements, and biographical forms. This article discusses some of the early challenges faced by Technical Services in caring for the collection, including a daunting number of under-described analog transcripts and audio materials in various formats, as well as strategies for ongoing improvement of oral history collection management and access. Born-digital preservation strategies, use of ArchivesSpace, cross-departmental collaboration approaches, and metadata procedures are some of the topics covered. Brief informational or instructional videos are included in the article in order to expand on certain topics in more depth.

Audiovisual materials are the fastest growing segment in archives and special collections, and academic libraries are increasingly finding themselves acquiring oral histories.[1] Technical advances; ease in obtaining good quality, affordable interview equipment; and popularity of high-profile projects like StoryCorps, has facilitated the growth in popularity of oral histories.[2] Further, these interviews have become an important resource for scholars in recent years, which necessitates that archivists adopt

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[1] Brenda Nelson-Strauss et al., *The Library of Congress National Recording Preservation Plan*, (Washington, D.C.: Council on Library and Information Resources; The Library of Congress, 2012), accessed September 30, 2016, https://www.loc.gov/programs/static/national-recording-preservation-plan/publications-and-reports/documents/NRPPLANCLIRpdfpub156.pdf; Kimberly Weatherford Stevens and Bethany Latham, "Giving Voice to the Past: Digitizing Oral History," *OCLC Systems & Services* 25, no. 3 (2009): 213.

[2] Clifford Kuhn, "Let's Get Digital! Possibilities and Problems of Oral History in the Digital Age," *Provenance, Journal of the Society of Georgia Archivists* 31, no. 2 (2013): 98; "About StoryCorps," StoryCorps, Inc, accessed September 26, 2016, https://storycorps.org/about/.

an active role in ensuring these collections are accessible.[3] Susan Wynne stated, "oral histories deserve attention precisely because they are unique to a particular institution and often cover topics or viewpoints that may be underrepresented in published works."[4] UNLV University Libraries Special Collections is taking practical steps to care for oral history interviews, including both legacy collections and current acquisitions. We believe readers will recognize similar challenges at their own institutions and will find the strategies outlined in this article to be beneficial.
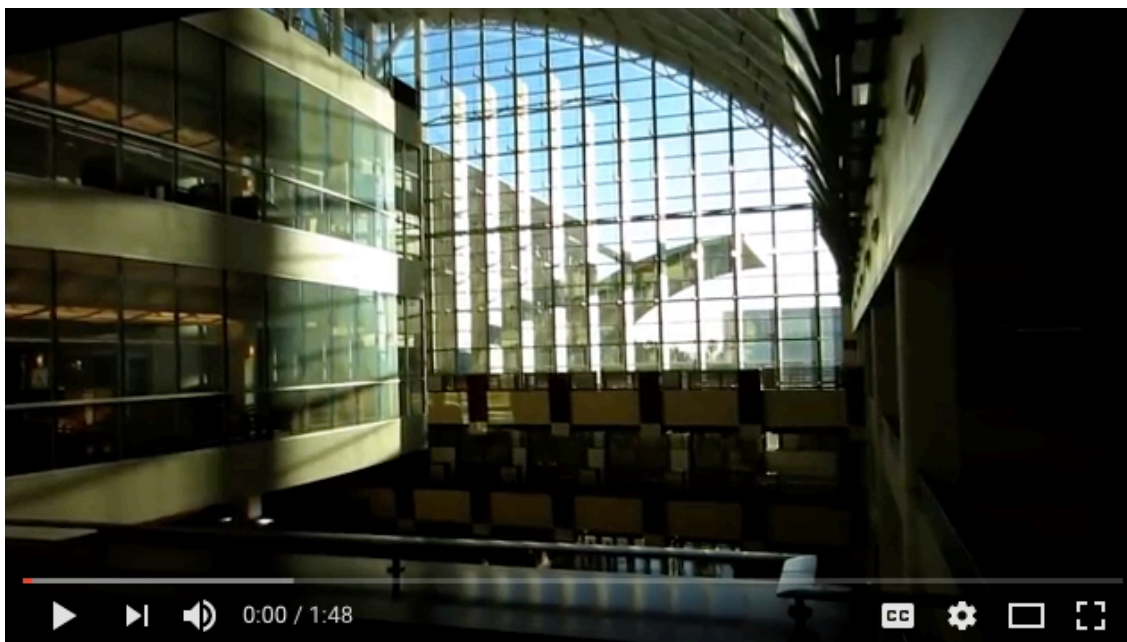
Tour of UNLV Special Collections (01:48)

Summary of Major Challenges

In his article in *The American Archivist* in 1983, James Fogerty entreated archival institutions to fund and design oral history projects "as an adjunct to its operations staffed by professionals independent of, but allied with, the archives staff."[5] UNLV University Libraries is fortunate to have implemented the Oral History Research Center within the Special Collections division to collect and document current events that are not always captured by traditional archival methods.[6] Managing the OHRC's robust collection comes with some challenges. Currently, the OHRC consists of one permanent, full-time professional employee and two full- time, temporary employees who are funded year-to-year on a project basis. Special Collections Technical Services is comprised of five permanent staff and faculty members, currently only one of whom has dedicated time to perform functions related to the OHRC. It should also be noted

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[3] Ellen D. Swain, "Oral History in the Archives: Its Documentary Role in the Twenty-first Century," *The American Archivist* 66 (Spring/Summer 2003): 140.

[4] Susan C. Wynne, "Cataloging Oral Histories: Creating MARC Records for Individual Oral History Interviews," *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 47, no. 6 (2009): 563.

[5] James E. Fogerty, "Filling the Gap: Oral History in the Archives," *The American Archivist* 46, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 157.

[6] Swain, "Oral History in the Archives," 157.

that one Technical Services position that provided some technical support for the OHRC was vacated during the time period this article covers. Lack of staff time and competing priorities has been and will continue to be a challenge associated with managing the oral history collection. When the Technical Services department was established it was clear that the OHRC had their hands full performing the most important function of their mission: conducting oral history interviews. The OHRC employees are not trained archivists, and while the center did an admirable job managing their collections and providing item level access to interviews for many years, the staff was justifiably primarily concerned with capturing quality oral history interviews and making transcripts available to the public. The importance of these functions cannot be overstated as the oral histories have documented Las Vegans in a unique fashion and have demonstrated to the public our dedication to telling and preserving their story, thus strengthening Special Collection's relationship with the community.

Technical Services encountered a number of areas in the archival management of oral histories that necessitated attention. An immediate and pressing need was providing administrative control for over 3,000 individual interviews which had varying degrees of online description and available documentation. While the majority of these interviews had individual entries in a local, online database, and full MARC catalog entries for select transcripts, we were also aware that many remained hidden. Materials were scattered throughout the division in multiple offices, filing cabinets, local files on the networked server, and stack storage space. Rights and permissions also sometimes proved challenging to verify. While the OHRC is vigilant regarding use agreements, contracts for legacy interviews proved more scattershot. In addition, collection numbers had never been assigned to any of the interviews, and the collection was growing at an average of 100 new oral history interviews per year.

The management of oral history interviews crosses departmental boundaries at UNLV: OHRC curates the interviews, Special Collections houses the collections and provides researchers with access, Discovery Services catalogs transcripts, and Digital Collections places select transcripts and audio content online in the CONTENTdm web portal. However, there were minimal intersections of information sharing, resulting in silos of data and disconnected workflows. The impending implementation of the collection management system ArchivesSpace offered an opportunity to centralize data, but the corralling, cleaning up, and standardizing of information would need to occur first. Moving forward meant that collaboration between all departments would be essential. Ellen Swain argues that "oral history's contribution and impact in the twenty-first century will depend on archivists' and librarians' ability and willingness to work together, in collaboration with other disciplines, to document and provide access to our oral heritage in the digital age."[7]

Preservation concerns quickly asserted themselves as another important matter. While there are very few oral histories found on reel-to-reel tape, Special Collections holds approximately 3,500 audio cassette tapes from the 1970s to the early 2000s. Researchers access these interviews by listening to the analog tapes in the Special Collections reading room. In 2012 the Library of Congress noted that many audio archives in the United States hold audio recordings in need of reformatting "in a way

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[7] Swain, "Oral History in the Archives," 139.

that enables repeated playback without harming the originals through excessive wear and handling."[8] Hall observes the necessity of converting analog oral histories to digital since the resulting files will be "easier to archive, store, and access."[9] By the time Technical Services was established there was already an initiative in Special Collections to digitize these tapes through a vendor. As noted earlier, there was minimal administrative control over the tapes, and metadata needed by Digital Collections, who would be overseeing the outsourcing, and the vendor, who would be digitizing the tapes, was insufficient. Since 2007, recorded interviews and supplementary photographs of interview subjects were kept as digital files on optical discs, and there were a large number of transcripts stored on floppy disks dating even earlier. While it was obvious that the digital files required transfer to secure storage in the immediate future, no policies or procedures yet existed in Special Collections for addressing born-digital objects, further complicating the matter. Nevertheless, we knew even without established protocols and workflows that we had to confront the issue. Reports, recommendations, and standards regarding born-digital audiovisual materials have been clear on the need to migrate and preserve sound recordings stored on unreliable storage media in a timely manner before degradation occurs.[10]

Finally, all of our enhancements behind the scenes would mean little without increased access for our users. While the OHRC has been actively producing transcripts for interviews conducted since 2003, legacy interviews remained mostly without transcripts unless produced on demand. One such oral history project, led by a UNLV history professor named Ralph Roske, deserved additional attention. In the 1970s, Roske tasked his students with interviewing residents of Las Vegas, some who lived in the area since the early part of the twentieth century and others who witnessed rapid growth and major changes in the 1950s and 1960s. While a transcript is not a complete substitute for the audio experience, most of our users prefer the ease with which they can conduct research using a transcript. Interviews from the Ralph Roske project are in high demand but are stored on audio cassettes, thus increasing the need for a written transcript, preferably in digital form. Placing transcripts from the Ralph Roske project online would provide a valuable resource for researchers.

Solutions

Improving the management of the oral history collections is a multi-stage, long-term project with short-term goals. While many positive changes have already taken place, we are still only just beginning to develop our policies and procedures, and some issues have not yet been fully addressed. Outlined in this section are fundamental, yet

[8] Brenda Nelson-Strauss et al., *The Library of Congress National Recording Preservation Plan*, 56.

[9] Wendy Hall, "Oral History Fast Forward: From Audiocassette to Digital Archive," *Colorado Libraries* 26 (2000): 9.

[10] See: IASA Technical Committee, *Safeguarding the Audio Heritage: Ethics, Principles and Preservation Strategy*, ed. Dietrich Schüller (Budapest: International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives, 2005), accessed September 26, 2016, http://www.iasa-web.org/sites/default/files/downloads/publications/TC03_English.pdf; Kevin Bradley et al., *Risks Associated with the Use of Recordable CDs and DVDs as Reliable Storage Media in Archival Collections–Strategies and Alternatives*, (Paris: UNESCO, 2006), accessed September 26, 2016, http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001477/147782E.pdf; and Mike Casey and Bruce Gordon, *Sound Directions: Best Practices for Audio Preservation*, (Bloomington: Indiana University; Cambridge: Harvard University, 2007), http://www.dlib.indiana.edu/projects/sounddirections/papersPresent/sd_bp_07.pdf.

basic decisions and actions taken to manage oral history interviews in the two years since the creation of Special Collections Technical Services.

Item- versus Collection-Level Description

As an early step of the archival management of oral history projects, many institutions will face the decision as to whether to provide item- or collection-level management and description of recordings. Local policy stipulates that item-level treatment is a requirement for the interviews held in Special Collections at UNLV University Libraries. Technical Services addressed the possibility of modifying this policy, especially in light of the strong likelihood that we would acquire external collections of oral histories containing a large amount of analog, or even more likely, digital files. Scalability going forward is a primary concern. According to the *Oral History Cataloging Manual*, which is the *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* (DACS) recommended oral history companion standard, an oral history project is "focused on documenting a topic, theme, era, place, organization, event, or group of people, conducted according to a plan, usually under the auspices of an institution or group of cooperating institutions."[11] Collective description adheres to principles of provenance, and interviews within a project "take on added meaning in light of relationships."[12] However, it is undeniable that item- level description provides for more detailed access, and MacKay argues that "modern practices favor item-level cataloging."[13] There are benefits to both approaches, and institutions must evaluate staff time, available resources, and the needs of researchers to form a decision. Collection-level description is preferable to no description at all, and no matter which approach is chosen, "you can always do one and link from the other."[14] Ultimately we did decide to maintain item-level treatment of oral history collections knowing that granular description would greatly reduce staff time spent addressing reference inquiries and would continue to support our user needs. We reserve the option to revisit this decision in the future if we find this approach is no longer sustainable, or if new technologies improve or automate some procedures in regards to item-level description.

Taking Administrative Control

An obvious and necessary initial priority was to ensure that staff could locate information about the oral history collection and manage it successfully into the future. Without collection numbers this was nearly impossible. During this early stage we also needed to address the first batch of outsourced audio cassettes going to the vendor for digital conversion due to a funding requirement deadline. Besides assigning collection numbers, the digitization project necessitated that we also provide a minimal amount of metadata, and do it fast. The most robust source of information about the oral histories at the time was the homegrown, online Special Collections database where staff and

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[11] Marion E. Matters, *Oral History Cataloging Manual*, (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1995), 7; Society of American Archivists, *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*, (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2013), 142.

[12] Matters, *Oral History Cataloging Manual,* 14.

[13] Nancy MacKay, *Curating Oral Histories: From Interview to Archive*, (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2006), 59.

[14] Susan C. Wynne, "Cataloging Individual Oral History Interviews" (presentation at Online Audiovisual Catalogers Conference, Macon, Georgia, October 16, 2010).

users go to locate information about the interviews. Although this was not a complete source, inclusion of more robust metadata would have to wait until a later stage. We also had to accept that scant metadata and lack of documentation would sometimes be the norm for legacy interviews and not let it prevent us from moving forward. In many aspects of managing oral histories Technical Services found it advisable to follow advice in the *Guidelines for Processing Collections with Audiovisual Materials* by the Smithsonian Archives of American Art. Their recommendations stipulate, "the objective is not to record every bit of technical metadata possible for AV media, but to provide enough information to enable intellectual access (the user should know what the content of the recording is), and physical access (the user and reference staff should know how to access the material.)." [15] More simply put by Matters in the *Oral History Cataloging Manual*: the "who, what, where and why."[16] As we adhere to the resource management strategy of "More Product, Less Process" (MPLP) in Technical Services, following this baseline standard was a natural fit.[17]

The online database was exported to an Excel CSV file, named Oral History Status, and has become the department's most reliable source for information. Duplicate entries were removed, dates were normalized, and names for each oral history project were standardized. After consultation with the director of the OHRC on defining single versus multi-part interviews featuring the same interviewee, all interviews in the oral history collection were assigned a collection number consisting of the prefix "OH" followed by a five digit string, adhering to a similar protocol for our manuscript and photograph collections.

Collaboration with Digital Collections was vital for outsourcing the audio cassettes. The Oral History Status file was repurposed by Digital Collections to inform internal status control files and metadata worksheets supplied to the vendor. Digital Collections entered the digital ID for the surrogate into the Oral History Status spreadsheet and also cross-checked the physical tapes with the metadata in the spreadsheet, making changes when necessary. Their item-level evaluation proved valuable as many inconsistencies in data were discovered and remedied. They also identified numerous cassettes that had never been given a record in the local database, therefore uncovering some previously hidden interviews. The digitization outsourcing project is ongoing and the success of this workflow is proven in its continued utilization.

The spreadsheet was once again repurposed in order to ingest accessioning information into ArchivesSpace. Data in the spreadsheet was mapped to the accession CSV file provided by ArchivesSpace and uploaded in batches after a testing process. Because our data is fairly minimal, we encountered few obstacles getting our oral history accessions uploaded. We did encounter an issue when fields in ArchivesSpace did not fully match some locally defined fields in our spreadsheet. In those cases, the "General Note" was utilized to capture the outlying information. It should be mentioned that we continue to duplicate information in both the spreadsheet and ArchivesSpace. While this is not desirable, ArchivesSpace is still limited in its ability to sort

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[15] Megan McShea, "Guidelines for Processing Collections with Audiovisual Material" (Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, May 22, 2015), accessed September 30, 2016, http://www.aaa.si.edu/files/documentation/2015-aaa-av-processing-guidelines.pdf, 24.

[16] Matters, *Oral History Cataloging Manual,* 17.

[17] Mark A. Greene and Dennis Meissner, "More Product, Less Process," *The American Archivist* 68 (Fall/Winter 2005): 208-263.

information easily and produce reports, necessitating the use of the spreadsheet due to its capabilities in these areas. Technical Services plans to use ArchivesSpace as our sole source of record in Special Collections, and we will phase out the spreadsheet as ArchivesSpace development improves. At the time of the writing of this article very few oral histories have been "spawned" into an ArchivesSpace resource record or finding aid. Technical Services is developing a plug-in for batch spawning of the oral history accessions into the resources module prior to the local public launch of ArchivesSpace (when our homegrown, online database will be phased out). We are also creating local corporate body agent records to link individual interviews to their project. Doing so maintains provenance of the interview, while also providing multiple access points for users.

Preservation Actions

With the oral history audio cassette digitization project underway, we turned our attention to the unprocessed born-digital files on removable media. Although Technical Services was not able to quantify an approximate number of items in need of preservation due to incomplete reporting, we knew the figure was very high. While it was easy to feel daunted by the number of unprocessed digital files, we knew we had to do something, start somewhere, and "move forward with practical and achievable steps."[18] As Cyndi Shein notes in her article on managing a born-digital oral history collection, "contemplating stewardship of born-digital resources can be overwhelming" but "implementing incremental steps toward their management is within reach for most repositories."[19]

The author (technical services librarian) and head of Technical Services have both attended Digital Archives Specialist (DAS) courses taught by the Society of American Archivists (SAA). Some early, basic procedures and policies were established for the ingest of born-digital materials in manuscript collections based on this coursework, as well as reports and recommendations in archival literature.[20] Workflows for the oral history digital files were then adapted from these practices. Modifications were implemented for two reasons. Firstly, Special Collections was the creator of the oral history files and therefore was not subject to the same standard of integrity checks and procedures. Although we were still very concerned about maintaining the authenticity of the files and following best practices, we devised shortcuts when

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[18] Ben Goldman, "Bridging the Gap: Taking Practical Steps Toward Managing Born-Digital Collections in Manuscript Repositories," *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* 12, no. 1 (2011): 16.

[19] Cyndi Shein, "From Accession to Access: A Born-Digital Materials Case Study," *Journal of Western Archives* 5, no. 1 (2014): 1.

[20] Particularly helpful were Christopher Prom, "Arrangement and Description of Electronic Records in Archives and Special Collections Part I and II" (DAS course, February 2015); AIMS Work Group, *AIMS Born-Digital Collections: An Inter-Institutional Model for Stewardship,* (United States: AIMS Project, 2012), accessed August 12, 2016, http://dcs.library.virginia.edu/files/2013/02/AIMS_final.pdf; Ricky Erway, *You've Got to Walk Before You Can Run: First Steps for Managing Born-Digital Content on Physical Media,* (Dublin, Ohio: OCLC Research, 2012), accessed September 15, 2015, http://www.oclc.org/content/dam/research/publications/library/2012/2012-06.pdf; and Julianna Barrerea-Gomez and Ricky Erway, *Walk This Way: Detailed Steps for Transferring Born-Digital Content from Media You Can Read In-House,* (Dublin, Ohio: OCLC Research, 2013), http://www.oclc.org/content/dam/research/publications/library/2013/2013-02.pdf.

possible. Secondly, the sheer number of interviews coupled with lack of staff time meant finding ways to make the process more efficient wherever possible. Our primary concern was transferring the files in full to stable and secure storage before deterioration of data occurred. Our plan also included centralizing all associated files for each oral history interview. This would give staff the ability to track down interviews faster and more efficiently than the laborious process of searching several physical and digital locations. Shein notes, "all born digital material is not created equal—it is prudent to determine the appropriate level of treatment for collections."[21] We were fortunate to not be under a deadline, but we still had to strike the right balance of a labor-intensive yet sustainable workload that could be carried out by student workers over a long period of time.

Materials from each individual oral history interview are housed in a single physical folder by OHRC staff. The folders are filed in multiple cabinets throughout the department depending on OHRC's established workflow. Instead of targeting specific interviews, we decided the best course of action would be to begin with the filing cabinets that were used primarily for current OHRC projects. Filing cabinets filled mostly with legacy interviews would be left to the end. The justification for this decision was that the more recent interviews would likely have the largest quantity of removable media. From there, we simply began at the first drawer of the cabinet and progressed in alphabetical order by the last name of the interviewee.

In consultation with the head of Technical Services and the accessioning librarian, a basic workflow was defined and tested. Once a number of possible scenarios had been addressed, a more detailed and comprehensive manual was created so that the work could be handed off to a student worker, who had approximately eight hours per week to dedicate to the project. After some training, the student was off and running, tackling, on average, five to eight interviews per week. When transferring files, the student runs a virus scan on the storage medium using Malwarebytes Anti-Malware. Write blockers are employed when necessary. Files are then copied to the networked server. The student compares properties between the files to ensure a complete transfer. Typical file types include WAVs, JPGs, TIFs, PDFs, and Word documents. Each oral history interview is assigned an individual folder on the server space, which is organized by the OH collection number. The main folder contains four subfolders: "originals" (preservation copies); "masters" (staff use and production of derivatives); "access" (patron use copies); and "documentation" (internal use documents and metadata.) After copying the files to the "originals" folder, the student renames the files using consistent and structured local naming conventions. Duplicates are then placed in the "masters" folder. The student will physically label discs with file names. Access copies are not created at this time due to the time commitment involved and instead are generated on demand as patrons submit requests.

The student scans the use agreement and biographical sheet at 300 dpi and saves the files as PDF documents. Also scanned are small sets of photographic prints (five or less); we believe a photograph of an interviewee enhances the context of an interview. The photograph will be added to the CONTENTdm record for the interview. All actions are tracked on the Oral History Status spreadsheet. The student verifies metadata in both the spreadsheet and ArchivesSpace accession record. Digital extent is also recorded. Once transfer of files and related actions are complete, individual oral history

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[21] Shein, "From Accession to Access," 29.

interviews are moved to read-only storage, which is backed up on data tape with multiple off-site storage locations. At the time of this writing, digital preservation systems for UNLV University Libraries are being evaluated for implementation in the near future. We anticipate that we will finish processing the oral history folders sometime in 2018, after which our goal is to ingest all the digital files into a preservation system. It should also be noted that the digital surrogates (WAV and MP3) created by the audio cassette outsourcing vendor are also gradually being integrated into this same structure.

Technical Services is completing a survey of all our archival collections in spring 2016. We are aware that there are a number of hidden oral history collections from external donors housed within our stacks. Among other objectives, the survey has been designed to gather information about audiovisual materials such as audio carrier format, physical condition, and research value. We have already identified various types of media such as zip disks and digital video tapes. Once the survey is complete we will be able to target these collections for processing and preservation. We plan to "identify … recordings that are at greatest risk because of format obsolescence and physical condition, in addition to those that have the most historical importance for ... users" in order to prioritize future preservation actions.[22]

Establishing an Accessioning Workflow

Prior to the establishment of Special Collections Technical Services, most management tasks were handled by the OHRC. After putting a workflow in place to address legacy interviews (analog cassettes, floppy disks, and optical discs), Technical Services staff knew the next important step regarding the oral history collection would be to focus our attention on new, born-digital interviews coming into the Oral History Research Center on a monthly, often weekly basis. As explained earlier, OHRC staff create a physical folder for each interview which contains audio recordings stored on optical discs that are copied from the recording device. Textual drafts of transcripts are also stored on removable media. The finished transcript is printed, bound, and cataloged. Occasionally, duplicate copies of digital files are also created on the networked server working space used by the OHRC. Since Technical Services now has a structure and workflow in place to store and manage the oral history collection in a centralized location following best practices, we felt it was vital for us to also take ownership of the born-digital files at the beginning of their lifecycle. According to the Library of Congress, "the application of methodologies appropriate to born-digital recording requires significant shifts in practice by content creators and producers, as well as archivists, who must adopt practices that support digital preservation as an active, managed process throughout the life cycle of the audio file."[23]

To implement this born-digital workflow effectively we had to work very closely with the OHRC. Shein states that "fostering an atmosphere of cross-departmental collaboration and experimentation leads to innovation and process improvement."[24] Technical Services staff bring archival expertise to the process. We are not trained in the art of oral history interviews and curation, do not have the subject

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[22] Nelson-Strauss et al., "The Library of Congress National Recording Preservation Plan," 21.
[23] Ibid., 24.
[24] Shein, "From Accession to Access," 29.

expertise regarding each oral history project, nor have the personal connections with the interviewees or understand all the precise needs of researchers who use oral history collections. Before any attempts to make significant changes were made, Technical Services spent time learning about these factors through conversations with the OHRC staff. We also thoroughly investigated and documented their current workflows so that any changes made still allowed for their valuable input in the accessioning process. The modified workflow reduced redundancies and allocated more time for the OHRC staff to focus on conducting interviews and creating transcripts. Changes were applied incrementally to make the transition easier, and at the time of the writing of this paper, some steps have not yet been fully implemented, as described later.

According to guidelines established by the Oral History Association*,* "institutions charged with the preservation of oral history interviews should understand that appropriate care and storage of original recordings begins immediately after their creation."[25] The first step for Technical Services is ingesting the sound recordings and source files as soon as the OHRC staff member returns from the interview. The OHRC completes the online local database record and hands off materials to the technical services librarian. The database record provides valuable metadata, including an interview description and topics of discussion. The technical services librarian assigns a collection number to the interview and hands off the use agreement and biographical sheet to a student to be scanned as PDFs. The audio recording, which has been stored on a secure digital (SD) flash memory card, is inserted into a write blocker to prevent any changes. A virus check is run, and if the scan is negative, the WAV files are copied to the networked server. File properties are compared to ensure a complete transfer, and then the file is renamed according to local protocol that follows best practices and includes the collection number. Casey and Gordon state that "creating structured, consistent, and well-formed local filenames supports local interoperability, parse-ability, and efficient use for the preservation workflow."[26]

Adobe Audition is utilized to embed XMP Dublin Core metadata into the original audio file(s). While Adobe Audition is not a free tool, there are alternate, open-source options available. While adding embedded metadata at the item level is a somewhat labor-intensive process, we believe these actions are essential and we use methods of batch processing when possible. Embedded administrative and descriptive metadata ensures that the files can be identified if separated from metadata stored externally.[27] Description therefore stays with files throughout their lifetime no matter the access method utilized.[28]

Once complete, "master" copies are created and MP3 "access" copies are also generated using Audition. Checksums for all files with enduring value are produced using the application md5summer and saved in a "documentation" folder. According to *Sound Directions Best Practices for Audio Preservation,* "generating the checksum soon after a file is created provides a baseline in case there are problems during the preservation workflow, or during storage or transmission."[29] We are not stitching

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[25] Oral History Association, "Principles and Best Practices for Oral History," adopted October 2009, Oral History Association, accessed October 4, 2016, http://www.oralhistory.org/about/principles-and-practices/.

[26] Casey and Gordon, *Sound Directions*, 36.

[27] Shein, "From Accession to Access," 15.

[28] Ibid., 27.

[29] Casey and Gordon, *Sound Directions*, 58.

together segments of interviews or editing the content of the audio files at this point as staff time does not allow for such processing actions. Local practice is to deliver audio files to patrons in the state they were received by the archives. Metadata is recorded in the Oral History Status spreadsheet, and an accession record is created in ArchivesSpace. The accession record contains the title of the interview, dates, creator, rights information, and digital extent, as well as the content description and interviewer name as provided by the OHRC. Information in the accession record adheres to requirements for fundamental elements stipulated in the *Oral History Cataloging Manual.*[30] An "event" document is included in the "documentation" folder along with the checksum. The entire accessioning process for each interview takes on average thirty minutes to complete, but saves invaluable time in the future. Staff spends less time locating files, access copies are readily available, the integrity of the files is assured, basic description has been recorded, and preliminary preservation actions have been put into place.

Ingest of the transcript files is slightly more complicated as each oral history project has unique workflows in the OHRC. For example, some projects are grant funded, which places creation of transcripts on a stricter timeline and requires that they are available online in CONTENTdm. During this process the Digital Collections department collaborates closely with the OHRC and utilizes the project management tool Trello to track their workflow. The technical services librarian receives a notification through Trello when a final transcript is ready. At this point the transcript files are moved from the OHRC working server space to the same location where the audio files reside. Duplicate "master" copies are created, and checksums are generated for the Word transcript files. A PDF/A access copy is generated. Once these actions are complete, the technical services librarian comments on the appropriate card in Trello with the location of the transcript so that the Digital Collections staff member can upload the file to CONTENTdm. At this point the files for the interview are moved to the locked server. Non-grant projects undergo a very similar workflow with the exceptions that Trello is not utilized, the OHRC staff member notifies Technical Services via email when transcripts are completed, and the transcripts are not placed online. The new accessioning process has streamlined oral history procedures, and reduced redundant actions in Special Collections. We are collaborating closely with the Discovery Services department to repurpose metadata created in ArchivesSpace in an effort to streamline the cataloging workflow. We are discussing the cost and benefits of creating MARC records for the thousands of legacy oral history recordings. Currently, MARC records are only created for edited bound transcripts. We are also hopeful that as we continue to refine oral history procedures, all new transcripts with signed releases will be placed online.
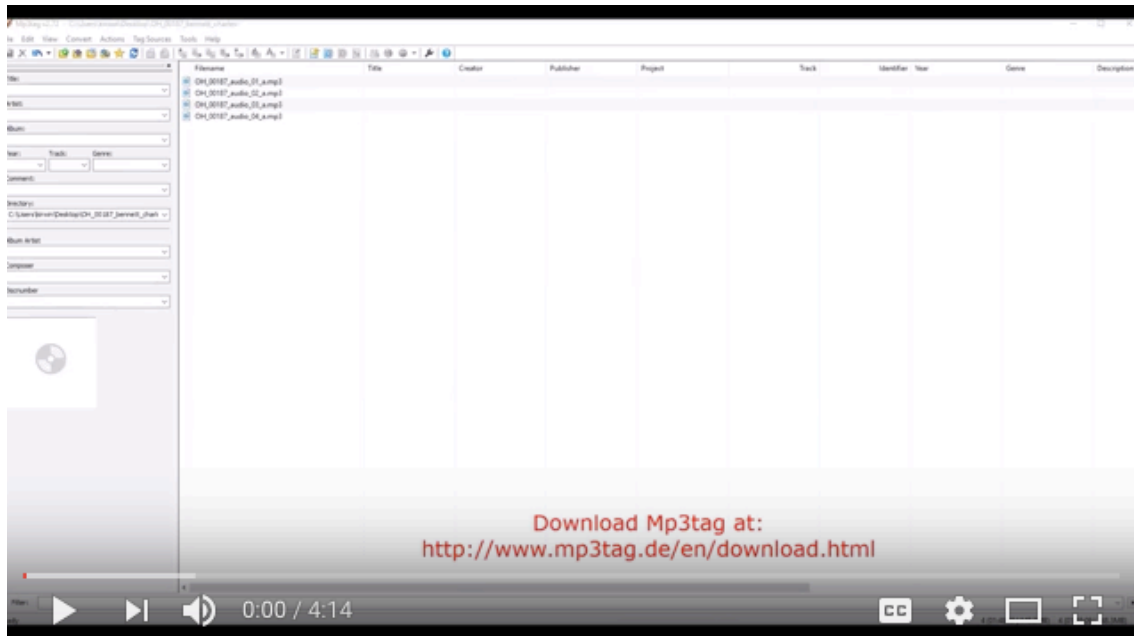
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[30] Matters, *Oral History Cataloging Manual*, 16.
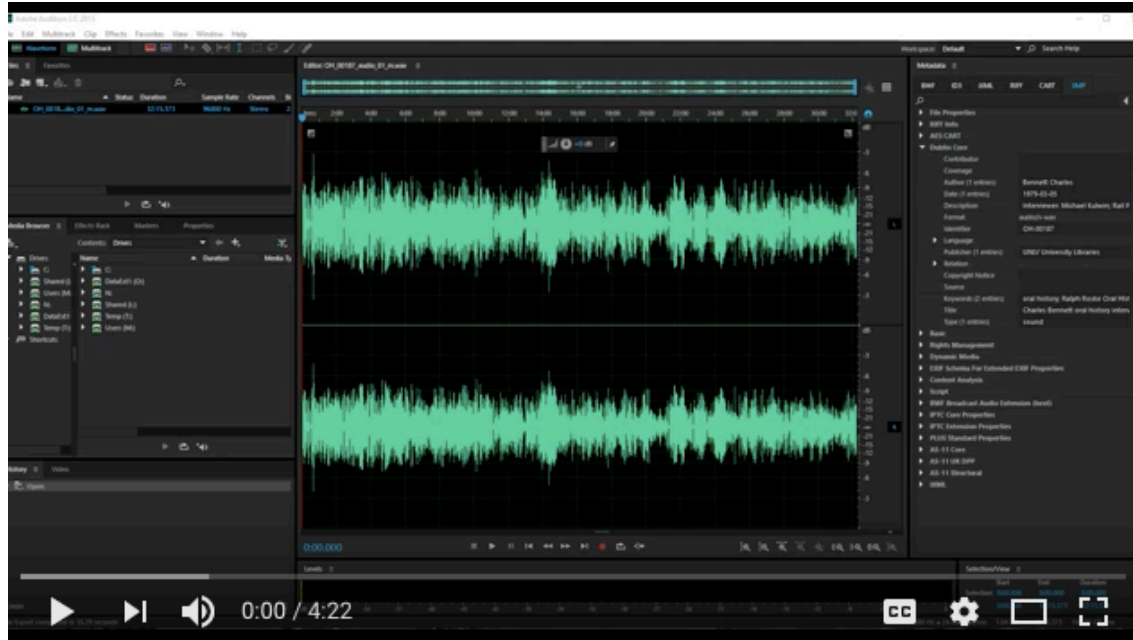
Adobe Audition Demonstration (04:22)
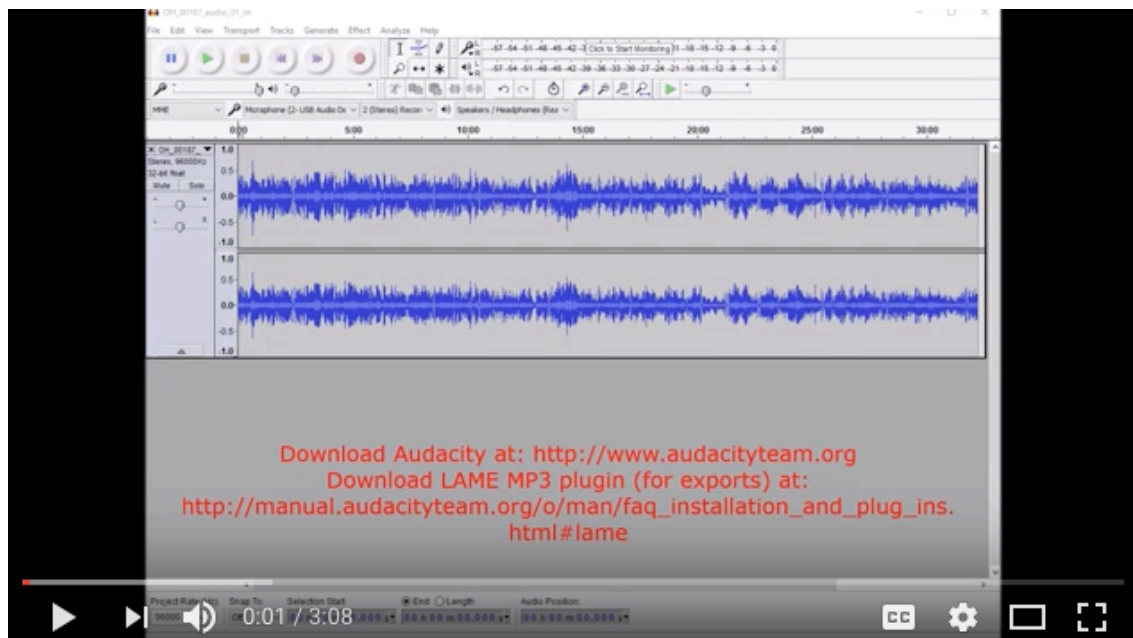
Audacity Demonstration (03:08)

Mp3tag Demonstration (04:14)

Increasing Access

 While more current oral histories are not yet online, we have devised a strategy for placing legacy transcripts in CONTENTdm. In 2015, two part-time temporary workers were hired to create transcripts for the legacy interviews that have been converted from audio cassette to digital files. The majority of these interviews are from the Ralph Roske project. We decided to create transcripts for all interviews, regardless of whether or not we had a signed use agreement, but only interviews where rights are confirmed would be placed online. The OHRC routinely creates a subject list, table of contents, index, and biographical note in transcripts. Because of the large volume of legacy interviews, we decided that staff time would be best focused on transcribing the recordings. Therefore transcripts include a title page, abstract, and statement about the legacy project. The contextual content we provide should be sufficient enough to create a basic finding aid in ArchivesSpace, a Dublin Core record in CONTENTdm, and eventually a MARC catalog entry. Since the contract employees are listening to the full content of the interview they are also verifying existing metadata and noting playback issues with the audio. The vendor had provided running times for each digitized file, which the employees also confirm while calculating the total playback time for an interview comprised of multiple files. While we are recording this data locally for collection management purposes when it is readily available, the information is not currently being added to the finding aid. Here we have taken a cue from the Smithsonian Institution's Archives of American Art *Guidelines for Processing Collections with Audiovisual Material*, which states, "the requirements to include such metadata in a finding aid would put an unnecessary burden on processing archivists … additional information about condition and other technical aspects of our AV material is kept in an internal database, but is not included in our public-facing collection

description."[31] While technical data would potentially be helpful to some researchers, we find that adding this additional layer of description to thousands of oral history interviews is just not feasible.

Once the final transcript is created, the employees notify the Special Collections technical services librarian who creates a PDF/A access copy. If photographs of the interviewee are available they are also included in the document. At this point, the technical services librarian "spawns" a resource record from the interview's accession record in ArchivesSpace. While we will be investigating batch creation of accession records into resource records in the future, it is beneficial to create EAD finding aids at this point so that Digital Collections can repurpose the metadata for the CONTENTdm entry. Descriptive decisions for oral history interviews are based on the local policies of adhering to *DACS* required fields, MPLP, and the fundamental guidelines for individual interviews described in the *Oral History Cataloging Manual (OHCM)*.[32] By adhering to OHCM we hope to "expedite the cataloging process by making key elements of the description readily available to the cataloger in such a way that they may be easily transcribed."[33] We must also keep in mind the needs of our researchers while seeking a balance with workflows and staffing. Thus, we include the following fields in our finding aid: unique identifier, title, creator/agent (name of interviewee(s)), date(s) of interview, extent, language, abstract (name of interviewer, topics discussed, and information about the interviewee), access note, and scope and contents note (availability of recordings, transcripts, and photographs). As noted earlier, we have also created corporate body agent records for each oral history project in ArchivesSpace. Each individual interview is then linked to its appropriate project, thus grouping them together while retaining their item-level description.

Once a month, the technical services librarian notifies the digital special collections librarian of the latest batch of transcripts, who then oversees the creation of records and metadata in CONTENTdm. Once a transcript is online, a link to the CONTENTdm record is provided in the local online database for each oral history interview. This is our interim solution for linking multiple databases until ArchivesSpace is publically available in 2017. Progress on the project is tracked in the master spreadsheet. We will continue to revisit and refine our workflow seeking new efficiencies whenever possible, with the ultimate goal to increase access to the collections.

Conclusion

UNLV University Libraries Special Collections has made significant progress in processing, describing, and preserving its collection of oral histories. We have implemented a holistic and iterative approach to care for our oral history materials throughout their lifecycle. By focusing on practical and attainable steps for managing our analog and born-digital holdings, we have gradually increased means of access for our users. Our newly established procedures, policies, and workflows offer achievable solutions for any institution with existing audiovisual collections coupled with an ever-increasing growth of born-digital materials in their holdings. We advise that when

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[31] McShea, "Guidelines for Processing Collections with Audiovisual Material," 24.

[32] Society of American Archivists, *Describing Archives*, 8; Matters, *Oral History Cataloging Manual*, 16-17.

[33] Wynne, "Cataloging Oral Histories," 574.

facing a project with major challenges and long-term implications, accept that change will not happen overnight, but may occur gradually, and even minor improvements can have a significant impact on discovery and access. Lack of staff time and competing priorities necessitate incremental change, but the point is to simply start somewhere with the skills and resources you have. Do not be discouraged if you are only able to take small steps—it takes many miles to win a marathon. Finally, when working with oral histories, the importance of collaboration cannot be stressed enough. Seamlessly integrating oral histories into the archival workflow means involving interviewers, curators, catalogers, reference staff, and digital collection librarians who can all offer valuable experience and expertise contributing to our ultimate goal: connecting users to these important resources.

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