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

Video Transcripts

Tour of UNLV Special Collections

Hello and welcome to Lied Library at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The Oral History Research Center is a department under the umbrella of the Special Collections Division. Special Collections, part of the only research library in Southern Nevada, is dedicated to supporting researchers studying the region, Las Vegas, and gaming. While the Oral History Research Center was not formally established until 2003, Special Collections has been acquiring oral histories since the 1970s. The Oral History Research Center holds approximately 3,500 audiocassettes in the collection. As of May 2016, 752 tapes have been digitized. We also have a backlog of unprocessed oral history collections from external donors. These include oral history recordings stored on optical media, digital video tape, and zip disks. Vertical files are used by the Oral History Research Center staff to manage the collection. The collection also includes media with born-digital content. Thankfully, we have a born-digital workstation to assist us in migrating files from the storage media. Thank you for joining us on the tour.

Adobe Audition Demonstration

Hello there. My name is Karla Irwin. I am the Technical Services Librarian at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. There are three video demos included in this article and each demonstrate different types of tools one can use for editing audio files, generating derivatives, and embedding metadata. Most tools I am going to demonstrate are free, with the exception of this one, Adobe Audition. Audition is included in the Adobe Creative Suite and I find it to be a very robust tool. If this software is not available to you, you can certainly get by with the tools I will demo in the other videos.

Here on the screen you can see that there is an audio file already open which is an oral history. As I mentioned in the article we do very minimal editing of audio files in terms of stitching files together and making modifications to improve their sound quality. However, if your institution has the ability to do such processing Audition certainly has that capability. You are looking at a WAV file if you have not already noticed. I am going to demo three types of embedded metadata. First, we have XMP using the Dublin Core standard. XMP stands for extensible metadata platform and is an XML based schema. XMP become an ISO standard in 2012. The Dublin Core schema is also an ISO standard and probably something you are already well familiar with. You can see the fields we are using to embed metadata into our WAV files including author, date, description, format, identifier, publisher, keywords, title, and type. You can of course select which fields are best for your institution. We have not attempted to customize these fields at all and for our needs the default setting is sufficient. Also, unfortunately, there does not seem to be a method to batch edit metadata in Adobe Audition. You may be familiar with Adobe Bridge which does have the capability for batch editing of metadata but it does not include the XMP Dublin Core schema.

We are only using Audition for accessioning of new born-digital oral history files as each interview typically contains just one audio file and therefore it does not add a lot of extra burden to embed metadata into the WAV files at this point. We use a different tool for MP3 files which I will demo in another video and that one does have the ability to embed metadata in a batch process. Audition also embeds and displays the Broadcast Wave Format metadata schema which contains technical information about the audio files such as the device the audio was recorded on, playing time of the file, and date of origination. Let me just quickly show you the ID3 metadata schema which are commonly used tags for MP3 files. I will talk about this a bit more in other videos, I just wanted to show you can embed this metadata using Audition for your MP3s. Overall, we have found that Audition is quite easy to learn for basic functions.

There are probably a lot of features that we are not fully taking advantage of, but it does meet our current needs. You can also process audio files in batches such as when converting multiple WAV files into MP3s. You can export MP3 files very easily using Audition which I will demonstrate right now. With your WAV file open, go to "export", "file", and we are just going to rename our file name so it reflects our access copy. Browse to the location where we are going to save our access copy. You see that we will generate an MP3. You also see this little, yellow warning icon. It is just telling us that our sample type, which for the preservation copy, is a 96/24 bit sample rate, but an MP3 is going to require something different. We are not going to change this right now, since it will prompt us anyway, so we will just select "ok". Audition is warning us that we should have a backup of the audio file which we do, and here we get the prompt to convert to a 48/24 bit sample rate. We are going to say "ok" because that is what we want for the MP3. Audition will then generate the MP3 for us. Depending on the size of the file, but it usually doesn't take more than a minute or so. That is a quick look at Adobe Audition. Thank you.

Audacity Demonstration

Hi there. My name is Karla Irwin and I am the Technical Services Librarian at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. There are three video demos included in this article and each demonstrate a different type of tool one can use for editing audio files, generating derivatives, and embedding metadata. We are now looking at Audacity, which is a commonly used, free tool for converting WAV files into MP3s and embedding some very basic metadata. This is a really solid tool for creating access copies and it is super easy to use. Like Adobe Audition, you can also edit audio files using Audacity.

We have already imported our WAV file so I am going to just demonstrate exactly how easy it is to export an MP3 using Audacity. We go to "export audio". Audacity will prompt us to find a location to save our access copy and that will be our access folder for this oral history interview. We are going to rename our audio file to reflect that it is an access copy. Select "save". I have already entered in some information here for the metadata so you don't have to watch me type during the course of this demo. Here is some metadata you can add and you are looking at the ID3 metadata schema. If you are not familiar with ID3, it is a very commonly used tag for MP3 files. When you are listening to a sound recording on your computer or your phone that is the metadata that you will see displayed on the screen. You can tell by the tag name that these are more commonly used for music audio files and unfortunately you cannot customize these fields in Audacity. What you can do is locally create some rules for the tag names. Such as artist name becomes the interviewee, track title becomes the title of the interview, and the album tile becomes the oral history project title. Year really only is the year, you cannot display the full date unfortunately. We have oral histories as a genre, and for comments you can add a full description of the interview such as an abstract or a summary. This is a basic way to embed some metadata into you MP3 files. I will demo another tool called Mp3tag in which you can customize the tag names, so you could choose to skip this step at this time if you would prefer to use Mp3tag instead if you really are not happy with the titles of these tags. Once you fill those in, select "ok". Audacity is going to prompt you to say the sample and bit rate for the WAV file is not supported in an MP3 file format. As mentioned in the Audition demonstration, this bit and sample rate does reflect the preservation and master copies. Audition, like Audacity, will convert to the rates supported for MP3 files. We will select "ok". There we go. Audacity is now exporting our MP3 file. In Audacity you can import multiple WAV files and export them in batches as MP3s. That concludes our quick look at Audacity. Hope you have enjoyed it. Thank you.

Mp3tag Demonstration

Hello there. My name is Karla Irwin and I am the Technical Services Librarian at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. There are three video demos included in this article and each demonstrate a different type of tool one can use for editing audio files, generating derivatives, and embedding metadata. We are now looking at a free tool called Mp3tag which is a great tool to use for batch editing of embedded metadata in MP3 files. Just as an FYI, this tool does support other file formats, most notably video files like MP4. Mp3tag utilizes the ID3 schema, which are commonly used tags for MP3 files and are what you see displayed on the screen when listening to a sound recording on your computer or mobile device. Unlike Audacity, which we saw in another video, you can create user defined field mappings using Mp3Tag in order to customize the ID3 tags. You can see the ID3 schema here on the left. We've customized the fields on the columns here at the top. For example, artist has become creator and album has become the oral history project. In order to customize these tags you go to "view" and then "customize columns". For example, this previously said artist and we customized it to read creator which of course fit our local needs for these oral histories much better.
You are looking at four MP3 files from one oral history interview. They have not been stitched together. We want to batch edit these files to add some metadata. Go to "edit" and "select all files" so that anything we input in these fields will be added to all of the audio files. From there just fill in your metadata. We'll start with the title, and then we'll add our interviewee. Album is now the oral history project name. Let's put in the date of the interview. Genre is oral histories. For comment we are going to add in our summary. Our summary contains information about the interviewee, the interviewer, the location, as well as a summary of the subjects discussed. Album artist is our publisher which is UNLV University Libraries. Disc number is our collection number. Once you have all those filled in, select "save" and like magic we have all our metadata. Let me just scroll over so you can see some technical information regarding these files that include things like the playing time of the file. Because we are not stitching these together I am just going to go ahead and add the tracks in case that is not easily noted by the patron looking at the file title. This just adds another layer in which to help the user understand how to interact with the files. Now that this metadata has been embedded into the MP3s whenever a user listens to these files this metadata will travel with the file and display in whichever media player is used to access the files and be contained in the file properties. That is Mp3tag. I hope you have enjoyed this video. Thank you.