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CINE-GT.1800
Intro to MIAP
12/15/17

The Radio Preservation Task Force and the National Recording Preservation Plan

After attending the 2017 Radio Preservation Task Force conference at the Library of Congress in Washington D.C, I, frankly, had more questions than answers about how exactly the task force operates and interplays within the structures of academia, media, and the Library of Congress. Surely a few months of MIAP training had contextually tied me in to many of the preservation and archival issues and themes being discussed at panels. Yet, respectfully, I still did not fully understand the main interplays between the Library of Congress, the task force, and how a task force in general works under the auspice of specific missions of the Library of Congress. On top of it all, this was the first academic conference I had attended which was a head-spinning learning experience in its own right.

I approached this project as an institutional investigation so I could better put the pieces together in my mind for personal and professional comprehension. I first contacted Josh Shepperd, Director of the Radio Preservation Task Force, with an inquiry to more closely examine the aforementioned institutional interplays and requested an interview with him. He agreed to help me on my investigative mission, and suggested that instead of merely interviewing him that I would be best served by interviewing experienced audio preservation professionals at the Library of Congress. Subsequently, he graciously granted me interview access to Matthew Barton, Curator of Sound at the Library of Congress, and Cary O'Dell,

Boards Assistant to the National Recording Preservation Board of the Library of Congress. After brief email introductions, they both agreed to be interviewed via phone.

My next task was to research the most pertinent primary source related to audio preservation at the Library of Congress, the 2012 National Recording Preservation Plan. I combed over the 78 page report to best understand the official goals and policies of the Library of Congress in relation to the preservation of sound recordings and next created a list of 54 questions to ask Josh Shepperd, Matthew Barton, and Cary O'Dell. I knew many more questions would be asked on the spot contextually during the respected interviews. As predicted, I did not get to ask every question which was tailored in advance, but also, got to ask impromptu questions which ended up being some of my favorite moments of the process.

I had an idea of how to approach each interviewee with different types of questions best suited to their job description. Admittedly, as a beginner, I did not fully understand the intricacies of their jobs and for example, confused Matthew Barton's role as sound curator with that more of an audio engineer. As I started to shoot questions off, I realized that as a curator he was more a historian than a preservation engineer. I altered pre-existing questions and improvised new ones on the spot in context with the conversation so as to ask more fitting questions with respect for his most pertinent expertise.

In general, I prepared for each of the three interviews by reading over the questions I intended to ask over and over as to best internalize these inquiries and imagined how they might react to them and what directions the conversation would perhaps veer towards. I positioned what I considered to be the more pressing or important questions at the top of my list and ended up improvising much of the interviews based on their answers as to keep the interview as

conversational as possible in order to create a comfortable discourse and to get more natural answers from my interviewees. I am not an entirely experienced telephone interviewer; however, I do have years of experience conducting improvised interviews on college radio. Subsequently, I drew from those past experiences. It was admittedly challenging at times speaking in the proper archival and preservation vernaculars as I am just entering this field, but I think I did an admirable job of not fumbling too often with terms while being kept on my toes during the interview process. Frankly, I was nervous interviewing important figures at the Library of Congress with minimal working knowledge of the field besides reading over the National Recording Preservation Plan and the congressional National Recording Preservation Act of 2000.

After conducting the interviews the next phase involved a thorough listening of the three interviews in order to create a slideshow presentation for Dr. Besser, Dr. Suarez, and my respected classmates. Many hours were spent combing over the interviews which had a total run time of a tad over two hours in total. My goal was to paint a picture of how the Library of Congress audio preservation team operates and how and why they created the Radio Preservation Task Force in 2013 to help them reach their goals of broad preservation and access of American audio recordings. I created a detailed slideshow explaining the interplay between Congress, the Library of Congress, and the Radio Preservation Task Force. I explained how a task force is not an institution, but an initiative which hopes to influence policy and policy makers, universities and scholars, archives and libraries, and private media companies.

My next step was to create indexed appendices as the heart of my deliverables for the project. Often within the same minute long clip, there would be two or three different themes to note, so portions of each interview had to be played back over and over as to most accurately time code these themes so they would be accurate to the second. For each interviewee I created a

working list of anything that I thought was worth noting for scholarly purposes and would jot down the exact time code for the discussion. Sometimes it would be simply a mention of a specific person or university and sometimes it would be a four minute broad conversation about copyright or media formats.

After compiling a list for each interviewee, I then decided what the most cardinal themes were and decided on seven main categories which would then be divided into specific communicative notes under the auspice of each cardinal theme. The themes I chose as the most base were:

- I. The Radio Preservation Task Force
- II. The Library of Congress
- III. Copyright
- IV. Metadata
- V. Audio Preservation
- VI. Media Formats, Radio Broadcasts, News Reels, and Films
- VII. Universities, Institutions, Archives, Grants, and Academic Figures & Cultures

I subdivided each interviewee under each theme and wrote a brief summary of the contextual point of each note and the time code where it could be accessed in the corresponding recording. Some time coded notes were applicable to both, for example, copyright and audio preservation, so they were duplicated as an entry under both themes.

The overall research process provided a wonderful learning experience in a few key areas. Interview skills were improved on, appendix building was attempted and executed as a

first time exercise, slideshow and aural presentation techniques were improved upon, and conducting a research initiative into a federal organization was attempted successfully. The process was challenging and labor intensive, yet proved to be a largely transparent process through a combination of detailed primary sources and federal employees who were willing to candidly paint a portrait of their duties and the mission of the Library of Congress. For anyone attempting to endeavor on a similar investigative project I would recommend doing as much back-end research as possible and then to try to speak to as many pertinent sources as possible in order to best understand the complex bureaucracies of federal institutions.

Radio Preservation Task Force Interview Appendix

Interview Key & Details:

- MB:** Matthew Barton, Curator of Sound Recording, Library of Congress
- Interview took place 12/8/17 and lasted 37:37, split into two files/audio takes; the first being only 02:07 and the second being 35:30
- CD:** Cary O'Dell, Boards Assistant to the National Recording Preservation Board of the Library of Congress
- Interview took place 12/5/2017 and lasted 29:37
- JS:** Josh Shepperd, Director, Radio Preservation Task force
- Interview took place 12/12/17 and lasted 58:06

Appendix Key:

- I.** Radio Preservation Task Force (RPTF)
- II.** Library Of Congress (LOC)
- III.** Copyright
- IV.** Metadata
- V.** Audio Preservation
- VI.** Media Formats, Radio Broadcasts, News Reels, and Films
- VII.** Universities, Institutions, Archives, Grants, and Academic Figures & Culture

I. Radio Preservation Task Force

Josh Shepperd Interview:

JS: Origins	00:28 – 03:10
JS: Recruiting archives for participation	05:20 – 05:38
JS: Director, rise to position	05:43 – 07:14
JS: Origins and relation to copyright	07:14 – 11:38
JS: No centralized national radio registry	11:00 – 11:37
JS: Centralized radio registry as goal of task force	13:00 – 13:44
JS: Audio Preservation coalitions as influenced by RPTF	16:49 – 17:43
JS: Grants for Radio Preservation as influenced by RPTF	17:44 – 19:18
JS: Centralized national radio registry	22:31 – 22:48
JS: Mission	27:17 – 28:37
JS: Divisions of the task force	28:57 – 30:57

JS: Building partnerships between federal institutions	34:05 – 38:43
JS: Success of the task force	47:52 – 48:59
JS: Legacy of the task force	49:00 – 50:11
JS: Conclusion of the task force	50:11 – 50:49
JS: Influence in the preservation community	51:22 – 52:02
JS: Conference 2017	53:48 – 55:45

Cary O’Dell Interview:

CO: Finding rare radio recordings:	04:05 – 04:40
CO: Board of Directors	07:33 – 07:53
CO: To complete LOC preservation mission	07:53 – 10:12
CO: Conference ‘17	09:00 – 09:16
CO: Audio preservation awareness and RPTF	10:26
CO: Role in raising historical awareness for radio broadcasts	12:45 – 13:43
CO: Conference ‘17	18:55 – 19:18
CO: RPTF and radio registry	27:35 – 29:09

Matthew Barton Interview:

MB: MB participation in	11:07 – 11:24
MB: Radio preservation and scholarship	12:42 – 14:00
MB: Influence in audio preservation culture	11:52 – 14:22
MB: Esoteric histories advocacy	14:23 – 17:05

II. Library Of Congress

Josh Shepperd Interview:

JS: National Recording Preservation Plan	02:10 – 03:10
JS: No Centralized radio registry	11:00 – 11:37
JS: Centralized radio registry	22:31– 22:48
JS: Copyright Task Force	27:13 – 27:25

Cary O’Dell Interview:

CO: Finding sound materials for preservation	00:46 – 03:42
CO: National database of sound recordings	01:00 – 01:58
CO: National recording registry	02:00 – 02:40
CO: Locating rare MIA audio recordings	03:11 – 03:42
CO: Rare recordings donations	04:51 – 05:40
CO: Sound curatorship	05:14 – 05:21
CO: Job description of Cary O’Dell	06:13 – 07:30
CO: National Film Preservation Board	06:19
CO: Sound and film registries	06:39
CO: National Recording Preservation Plan	07:17 – 07:30

CO: LOC mission and RPTF role in aiding	07:53 – 10:12
CO: Sound registry	12:07 – 12:22
CO: Copyright task force	15:18 – 15:32
CO: Centralized LOC database	21:58 – 22:08
CO: LOC and DIY audio preservation education	23:32 – 25:38

Matthew Barton Interview:

MB: Job Description, Curator of Sound at LOC	(Audio take 1)	00:20 – 02:07
	(Audio take 2)	00:00 – 00:57
MB: Preservation processes at LOC		02:20 – 03:22
MB: Tony Schwartz collection		03:38 – 04:30
MB: Best practices		08:20 – 09:22
MB: Workflow of audio preservation department		09:23 – 10:48
MB: Processing / Cataloging unit		09:52 – 10:48
MB: Daily digital transfer workflow at Culpeper		24:34 – 25:52
MB: National jukebox at LOC webpage		26:27 – 26:48

III. Copyright

Josh Shepperd Interview:

JS: RPTF origins and relation to copyright	07:14 – 11:38
JS: Copyright conversation	07:41 – 11:38
JS: No centralized radio registry	11:00 – 11:38
JS: Orphan radio recordings	22:13 – 22:31
JS: Centralized registry	22:31 – 22:48
JS: Fair use	23:24 – 23:58
JS: Copyright and risk assessment	25:55 – 26:48
JS: Copyright Reform	26:49 – 27:13
JS: LOC copyright task force	27:13 – 27:25

Cary O’Dell Interview:

CO: YouTube and copyright	16:05 – 16:18
CO: Fair Use	16:20 – 18:53
CO: Fair Use and risk assessment	18:55 – 20:26
CO: Cease and Desist	19:22 – 19:48
CO: Orphan Works	20:40 – 22:08

Matthew Barton Interview:

MB: Copyright and sound recordings	01:25 – 02:19
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IV. Metadata

Josh Shepperd Interview:

JS: Radio station broadcast metadata uploads	14:40 – 14:58
JS: Collection level metadata descriptions	15:18 – 15:54
JS: Metadata	39:35 – 40:11

V. Audio Preservation

Josh Shepperd Interview:

JS: Northwestern Universities sound studies program	14:00 – 14:12
JS: Magnetic tape degrading	15:55 – 16:13
JS: Audio preservation labor coalitions	16:49 – 17:43
JS: Private radio broadcast collection community	19:48 – 22:12
JS: Old Time Radio	21:07
JS: SPERDVAC	21:12
JS: Scholarship, research and radio preservation	29:42 – 33:08
JS: Non- Theatrical media	43:19 – 44:12
	44:55 – 45:24
JS: Haitian refugees and pirate radio	43:44 – 44:46
JS: Civil rights broadcasts	44:55 – 45:24
JS: Culture of influence in preservation community	51:22 – 52:02

Cary O'Dell Interview:

CO: Finding sound materials for preservation	00:46 – 03:42
CO: National Recording Preservation Plan	07:17 – 07:30
CO: LOC and DIY audio preservation education	23:32 – 25:38
CO: IRENE audio reconstruction system	25:40 – 27:14

Matthew Barton Interview:

MB: Audio preservation priorities	00:37 – 00:44
MB: Process of preserving at LOC	02:20 – 03:22
MB: 78s and vinyl records	02:47 – 03:22
MB: Tony Schwartz collection	03:38 – 04:30
MB: Reel- to- reel tape preservation issues	03:46 – 03:56
MB: Compact disc preservation	04:30 – 04:50
MB: Sony DASH digital reel- to- reel	05:02 – 05:20
MB: DAT tape preservation issues	05:13 – 05:54
MB: Magnetic media preservation	06:33 – 08:15
MB: Workflow of audio preservation department	09:23 – 10:48
MB: Processing / cataloging unit	09:52 – 10:48

MB: RPTF influencing audio preservation culture	11:52 – 14:22
MB: Daily digital transfer workflow at Culpeper	24:34 – 25:52
MB: Educational initiatives for audio preservation	28:00 – 31:01
MB: Backgrounds of audio preservationists	31:03 – 31:58

VI. Media Formats, Radio Broadcasts, News Reels, and Films

Josh Shepperd Interview:

JS: Portal streaming system	24:01 – 24:27
JS: Non– Theatrical media	43:19 – 44:12
	44:55 – 45:24
JS: Haitian refugees and pirate radio	43:44 – 44:46
JS: Civil rights broadcasts	44:55 – 45:24

Matt Barton Interview:

MB: 78's and vinyl	02:47 – 03:22
MB: Compact disc preservation	04:30 – 04:50
MB: Sony DASH digital reel– to– reel	05:02 – 05:20
MB: DAT tape preservation issues	05:13 – 05:54
MB: Pearl Harbor radio broadcasts	15:10 – 15:56
MB: Radio broadcasts as anthropological sources	17:05 – 17:43
MB: Marian Anderson recital at Lincoln Memorial	17:44 – 19:13
MB: Historic news reels	17:53 – 18:19
MB: Radio broadcasts and the artistry involved	20:16 – 23:33
MB: Silent Movies	21:17 – 21:24
	23:18 – 23:25
MB: Vinyl revival	33:48 – 34:42

VII. Universities, Institutions, Archives, Grants, and Academic Figures & Culture

Josh Shepperd Interview:

JS: University of Wisconsin media studies	03:58 – 05:15
JS: Northwestern University sound studies program	14:00 – 14:12
JS: Marquette University	14:16
JS: Indiana University	14:51
	51:17
JS: Stanford University	15:52
JS: ARSC	14:56
JS: Archive.org	25:18 – 25:43

JS: Scholarship, research and radio preservation	29:42 – 33:08
JS: Antonio Gramsci	33:20
	55:02 – 55:11
JS: Building partnerships between federal institutions	34:05 – 38:43
JS: Corporate mentality tainting academic culture	38:51 – 39:32
JS: MITH	40:12 – 40:21
JS: Howard Besser	48:29
JS: Smithsonian Folklife	49:00 – 49:20
JS: NMAAHC	49:22
JS: NYU	51:00 – 51:13
JS: Dan Streible	53:54
JS: MIAP	56:52 – 57:31

Cary O’Dell interview:

CO: UC Santa Barbara	01:20
CO: Indiana University	01:27
CO: Steve Leggett	06:25
CO: CSPAN	11:40 – 11:47
CO: NPR	11:48
CO: NEH	09:18 – 09:53
CO: Radio World magazine	11:15 – 11:37
CO: Archives role in the future	13:48 – 14:33