

Mary E. Jackson
CINE-GT 3049
Observational Study
February 22, 2019

My observational study was conducted at the following two institutions: the Museum of the City of New York (MCNY) and the Paley Center for Media (Paley Center). I chose both museums for their interactive, accessible collections. MCNY states as their mission:

“The Museum of the City of New York Fosters understanding of the distinctive nature of urban life in the world’s most influential metropolis. It engages visitors by celebrating, documenting, and interpreting the city’s past, present, and future.”

During our MIAP Cohort’s visit, of particular interest to me was the overview of the processing workflow and collection management work of the Recorded Sound Processing Unit led by the head of the unit, Patrick Midtlyng. I was particularly interested in this area since my exposure to collection management, to date, was with a small non-profit organization. I was curious, given the size of the Library of Congress, and the amount of materials received by the institution, how items are processed and how they determine what to add to their collection.

Recorded Sound Processing Unit

During our tour of the Recorded Sound Processing Unit, Patrick Midtlyng stated that, in addition to audio items, the unit also manages books and paper materials in their Manuscript Room. The unit’s current project is the Bob Hope Collection, an estimated three-year project, consisting of approximately 688,000 items. As a result of the scope of this project, the unit hired their first official archivist for this area and are in the process of hiring an additional archivist. Paper that comes into the unit is counted, prioritized, and added into the queue for the archivist to begin reviewing.

Patrick indicated that in the unit's work, processing plans are a priority. Additionally, other factors such as the size of the collection, the type of items in the collection, the space available in the holding areas and the vault, what is currently in the processing queue, are all considerations in decisions that are made about whether to conduct a box or item-level inventory. The unit has a couple of workflow processes that they use to gain inventory control (not intellectual control) as they develop processing priorities.

Patrick noted that a key difference between the book and paper collections versus the recordings is the amount of paperwork included with audio collections. Paperwork includes, for example, sound engineer notes on master recordings, transcripts, etc. All of this paperwork has to be matched with the audio item.

In discussing the unit's workflow, Patrick stated that the initial step in the accessioning process counting the materials received, organize them by size and format, and that information is added to a spreadsheet. Patrick then works with the cataloging technicians to establish processing priorities. Before items are processed, they are sorted in order to determine what items will be kept and what is surplus. The sorted items are on cubicle shelves and the unit collaborates with the curator to look at the collection, and take out exactly what NAVCC wants to keep. Given the number of items/collections the unit receives, there are two primary workflows. One workflow is for items received as a result of purchases and donations; the other for items received from the LOC's Copyright Office. Patrick noted that with the advent of digital downloads, and current U.S. Copyright Law which only covers fixed formats, there has been a sharp decrease in the items received from the LOC's Copyright Office.

Moving forward, Patrick stated that as NAVCC receives more multimedia items, such as computer disks or hard drives containing files, the NAVCC will need to consider how the unit

will incorporate these items into their workflow, how do they extract metadata, how do they describe these items, and how do they incorporate that into access.